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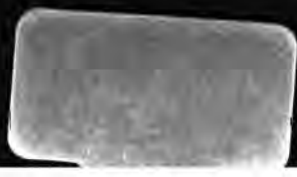
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# A FAMILY AFFAIR

VOL. III.



# A FAMILY AFFAIR

A Novel

BY

HUGH CONWAY

AUTHOR OF "CALLED BACK," "DARK DAYS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

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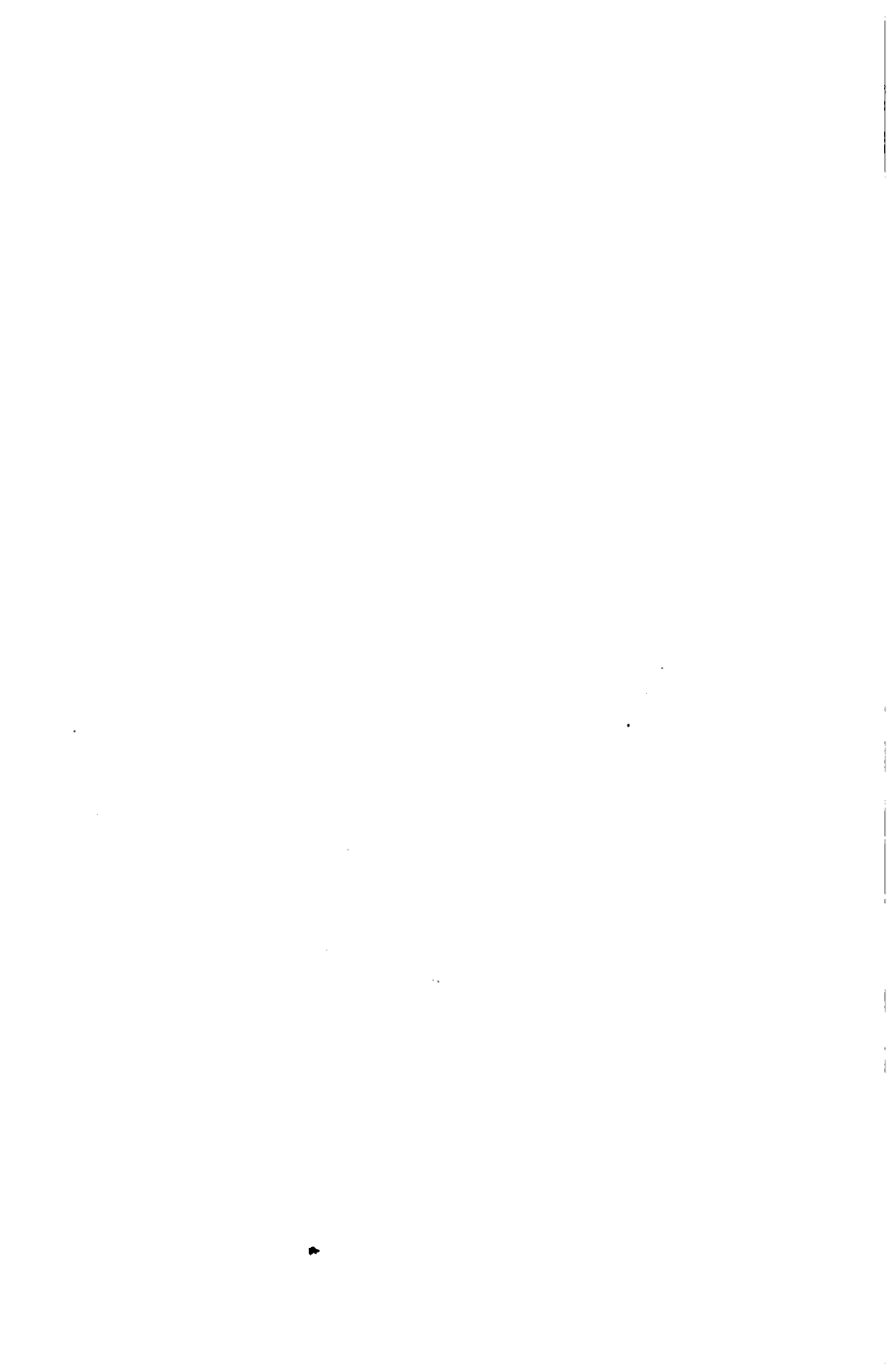
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## A FAMILY AFFAIR



# A FAMILY AFFAIR.

## CHAPTER I.

### ANOTHER PAINFUL TASK.

THE dinner that night at Hazlewood House was a dreary affair. Frank did not see his hosts until the gong sounded. Their calls had kept them so long that they were obliged to dress in undue haste to avoid unpunctuality in their own persons, a thing which would have amounted to a kind of moral suicide. The conversation whilst Whittaker was in the room was naturally forced. Frank could indeed tell them of the contemplated change in his life, but as all the while he was thinking how Beatrice

would have received the news, his communication was made with none of his usual vivacity. Horace and Herbert were mildly astonished. They trusted—in that way which implies doubt—that it would be for the best. To give up a certainty for an uncertainty seemed a pity ; but of course Frank knew his own business best. A remark with which Mr. Carruthers mentally agreed.

It seemed quite in order with the misfortunes of the house that the bottle of 1858 should have been shaken in some way and appeared cloudy, not to say thick. It might have been as thick as pea soup for all Frank cared.

Nothing, or next to nothing, was said during dessert about the recent painful event. Frank sat moody and silent. He was working out problems ; connecting Beatrice's flight with the man of the afternoon and the visit to the inn. For

Beatrice's sake he was now fighting for his own hand. Horace and Herbert he eliminated from the inquiry.

His moodiness affected his hosts, and upon his refusal to take more wine they suggested an adjournment to the drawing-room. Frank agreed readily. At any rate he could sit there and gaze at Beatrice's portrait.

"Do you mean to take any further steps?" he asked.

"I think not," said Horace. "Herbert and I have talked the matter over and feel there is no more to be done. We saw a great many people this afternoon, and I am sure have left a general impression that Beatrice has gone to visit friends."

"It was a most painful duty," said Herbert, "but one we felt must be performed. In fact, it was due to ourselves to forestall gossip."

"I am sure Frank quite understands the situation," said Horace.



A satirical smile curled round Frank's lips. "It must have been most painful," he said; "you must have felt like two Spartan boys with a joint fox under their clothes."

"Yes," said Herbert, simply; "we did."

"I have often heard the simile used," said Horace, "but its great strength never struck me until now."

Carruthers gave a short quick laugh; he could not help it. The brothers looked surprised. They could see no reason for any approach to merriment. A biting sarcasm came to the young man's lips, but he restrained it, and in a moment was glad he had done so. It would have wounded these two kind, mild-looking men, who, no doubt, were as unable to realise the anxiety raised in his breast by Beatrice's flight as he was unable to comprehend the importance of the consequences which they were making such sacrifices to avert. Seeing things in

the same light is a matter of constitution, education, and training.

Just then Whittaker brought in tea, and whilst he handed it round, Frank had leisure to rejoice, insomuch as he had kept his tongue in command. But misfortune had not yet done with Hazlewood House. Frank, in moving his arm, knocked down a cup, and sent its scalding contents over one of the several delicious little Chippendale tables, the pride of the Talberts' hearts and the envy of their lady friends.

The simile of the Spartan boy and the fox must have seemed even more appropriate to Horace and Herbert as they smilingly assured Frank it was of no consequence, none whatever. They did not even ring for aid. This, however, was because Whittaker, who had witnessed the catastrophe, was already on his way to the scene with an armful of soft cloths. He mopped, and dabbed, and wiped the table as tenderly

as a mother might perform the ablutions of an infant who suffered from some irritation of the skin. Horace and Herbert watched him for a while, and then, no doubt thinking their apparent carelessness had eased Frank's mind, joined in the rubbing and wiping. They twisted up corners of their glass-cloths and poked them into every little corner and interstice exactly as a cleanly nurse would have explored the ears and eyes of her infant charge. Frank was compelled to stand by all the time and feel what a clumsy ruffian he had been. He sighed his relief as Whittaker at last gathered up the dusters and departed.

Conversation languished. The misfortune to the table seemed to have driven Beatrice into the background. There is nothing like a second grief for driving out the first. Frank felt that Horace and Herbert were still thinking of that ill-used piece of furniture. He was right. Presently Horace

slipped out of the room, and returned with a small bottle of furniture polish and a piece of flannel. Gravely and deliberately he began polishing his slender-legged Chippendale treasure.

Frank could stand it no longer. There is a limit to penance, namely, human endurance. His nerves, after the events of the day, were highly strung, and he felt that if he watched Horace any longer he must burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter. "Can't we go and smoke?" he said.

"Certainly," said Herbert, whose mind was now more easy about the table. He accompanied Frank to the dining-room, where, by and by, Horace joined them. He brought with him an unmistakable odour of furniture-polish, so that Frank's remorse was, by the medium of his olfactory nerves, still kept awake.

"There is another painful duty to per-

form," said Horace, helping himself to a cigarette. Frank could not help thinking that the unmentioned painful duty was connected with the table. "We feel that we are bound to let Sir Maingay know what has happened."

"Of course. He is her father."

"Yes, he must be told. We think it better to make the communication orally." Horace was one who never misused the word "verbal." "We shall run up to town to-morrow and see him."

Frank had already been framing in his mind various excuses for a sudden departure. He felt that, fond as he was of Horace and Herbert, their constant society would at the present juncture drive him half mad. He jumped at the chance of escape. "I'll go with you," he said.

They protested against this, but Frank was firm. "My dear fellows," he said, "I have opened my heart to you. I have told

you my true reason for paying this visit. How can I possibly stay here with Beatrice away ? ”

He had his way. It was arranged they should all go to London on the morrow. Frank suggested that before going they should inquire if Beatrice had drawn any money from the bank. So on their way through the town the next day Horace and Herbert had an interview with Messrs. Furlong and Co., and ascertained that their niece had taken one thousand pounds with her.

When they came out of the bank they found Frank missing. Indeed, he kept them waiting fully five minutes before he reappeared. He had just been round the corner, he said, looking at some of the quaint old Blacktown houses. The truth is he had been to the “Cat and Compasses,” seen the expansive widowed landlady, and ascertained the address of her worthy friend,

Mrs. Rawlings. No doubt the Talberts could have given him this, but he did not care to trouble them for it.

As William Giles had accompanied his masters in order to drive the horses back, the Talberts, until they were in the train, could not make known to Frank the result of their inquiries at the bank. Frank heard the news gloomily. The sum taken by Beatrice showed that she meant her absence to be a prolonged one.

"Did you get the numbers of the notes?" he asked. They had not done so.

"I should get them. The first one she changes can be traced back, and we shall know where she is."

"I should never have thought of that," said Herbert, admiringly.

Horace said nothing. Conscience told him he would not have thought of it, but self-respect bade him hide the fact.

In London they parted. The Talberts

went to their favourite hotel, and Frank, who wished to be quite free and unfettered in his researches, went to his. The next day the brothers called on Sir Maingay Clauson, and Frank found the way to 142, Gray Street, the purveying establishment of Messrs. Rawlings Bros.

He asked for Mrs. Rawlings, and not knowing whether it was Mrs. John or Mrs. Joseph, was compelled to describe her as the one who had been at Blacktown some few days ago. That was Mrs. John. Mr. and Mrs. John were away. Would not be back for at least a week. No one knew exactly where they were. In their absence, caused perhaps by another wildgoose chase after a supposed son, Frank was compelled to defer his researches. His heart was very heavy. It seemed to him that he would only find Beatrice by the prosaic way of tracing back the bank-notes. He wished he had not suggested this course to Horace and Herbert.



He went down to Oxford and settled his affairs as best he could. He arranged with Mordle's friend, Fanshawe, a brother coach, to take such pupils as he could send him. So utterly unfit did he feel for work that he was glad to think that his new appointment did not become a fact for six months ; so that, except for the book which he had to see through the press, he would have nothing to occupy him but the search for Beatrice.

Horace and Herbert were more successful in their call. Sir Maingay was at home and appeared delighted to see them. But this effusiveness only covered a certain fear with which, perhaps on account of their striking resemblance to his dead wife, the baronet always regarded his tall, grave brothers-in-law. To my mind, a widower who marries again had better make a clean sweep of all his first wife's relations. A painful duty, yet due to one's self, as the Talberts would say.

"So. glad, so very glad, to see you, Horace; so delighted, Herbert," exclaimed Sir Maingay. "How well you both look! never saw you looking better."

They told him they were very well.

"You don't seem to grow a day older. No family cares to vex you. Most men keep young as bachelors. A family means responsibility as well as pleasure, you know." Sir Maingay nodded his head contentedly as one who knows all about it.

Just then a tremendous clatter took place overhead. It sounded like the beating of wood on ringing metal. "Repairs, I suppose?" said Horace.

"Oh, no. I expect that's my young rogues at play—sturdy young rascals they are," added the fond, middle-aged parent as the din increased.

"The nursery seems very near," said Herbert. Horace looked very disgusted.

"It isn't the nursery," said the baronet.

"I expect they're in the bath-room, just overhead. They get in there sometimes and beat my sponge bath with their nine-pins. We all liked that sort of thing when we were boys, you know."

Horace and Herbert were silent. They knew little about the ways of children, but felt it a cruel libel on themselves to suggest that they had in their most unthinking years ever been guilty of such conduct.

"I'll ring and stop the rogues," said Sir Maingay. "I'll have them brought down here. You'd like to see my boys, wouldn't you, Horace? You would, Herbert?"

An affirmative trembled on Herbert's kind lips, but Horace sternly interposed. "No; not just yet, Maingay; we have come to see you about an important matter. But we can wait till—till the boys have done."

Fortunately at that moment some one less indulgent than the father must have captured the little boys and led them away.

Serious conversation was once more a possibility.

“We have something to say to you about Beatrice,” said Horace.

Now Beatrice was the very last subject which Sir Maingay cared to discuss with his brothers-in-law. Although they had never said so much, he felt that they altogether disapproved of his conduct with respect to his daughter. He felt that they thought he should not have gone abroad and left her to herself, although she had been so left by her own expressed wish. To some people, especially those whose consciences were ill-at-ease, the Talberts’ grave, unspoken censure was more terrible than vituperation from any one else.

“About Beatrice,” said Sir Maingay. “Not ill, I hope? I thought her looking far from well when she left here.”

“No, she is not ill—but we are in some anxiety on her account.”

! " Ah, I think I know. I think I'm quite prepared for what you are going to say."

Horace raised his eyebrows. " You are !" he said. " If so, it will make our task easier."

" Much easier," said Herbert.

" Well, you are going to say that young Carruthers is in love with my girl. He came here once or twice ; I saw it then. He told me he was going down to your place."

" Yes, that is part of what we were going to say." They had decided it was as well to let Sir Maingay know of Frank's ambition.

" Well," said the baronet, " I like Carruthers. Besides, he is a kinsman of yours. I assure you, my dear Horace, my dear Herbert, I can never forget the many happy years spent with poor—" he actually hesitated for the name. Think of that, all young wives who believe that your husbands will be inconsolable should death remove you !—

“with a much-beloved member of your family.”

“Thank you,” said Horace, quietly. He recognised the fact that Sir Maingay meant well.

“Besides,” continued the baronet, “Beatrice is entirely her own mistress. She has a will of her own. I have no power over her fortune, which, by-the-bye, is almost as large as my own. This is just as it should be, because with those sons of mine it will be impossible for me to add to her income at my death.” So he rattled on, bringing out what was really a justification of himself.

“My dear Maingay,” said Horace, mildly, “would it not be better if you heard what we have to say and made your comments afterwards?”

“It would be a great deal better, Maingay,” said Herbert.

From the days of their first acquaintance

they had always assumed this air of superiority over the respectable nobleman. He had never even struggled against it. So he obeyed and was silent.

They told him all about Beatrice. Her letter they could not show him, having forgotten to ask Frank to return it. Sir Maingay listened, but did not appear much upset.

"We will of course take any steps you wish, or aid you in any steps you may take," said Horace, in conclusion.

"It's a nuisance, but I don't see any steps to be taken," said Sir Maingay, composedly.

"Neither do we. But we felt it right you should know at once."

"Quite so. As I said, Beatrice always had a will of her own. She is full of strange freaks—full of them. As you know, for some extraordinary reasons, she wouldn't be presented, and can't live in the same house with her mother——"

"Her mother!" exclaimed the Talberts in a breath, and glancing simultaneously at a certain picture on the wall; an upright landscape which filled the space once occupied by the portrait of Sir Maingay's "ALL."

The baronet coloured. "With my wife, I mean. You may be sure this is but a freak of the girl's. She has her maid with her, you say—a respectable, middle-aged woman. Oh, it will be all right. Perhaps she means to write a book. Ladies do all sorts of things to write books now-a-days. Lady Fanny Beaumont went through Patagonia and shot some niggers or something. There's another lady who roughs it in Italy and Spain. Fancy Spain, Herbert! You know what a beastly hole Spain is. Women do all sorts of out-of-the-way things now."

"Some women," said Horace severely. His ideal woman, if he had one, did no strange things. "However, if you are contented there is nothing more to say."



"I'm not contented. It's a nuisance to think of a child you love wandering heaven knows where. But she'll turn up all right again. Ah! here's my wife: we'll hear what she thinks of it."

Lady Clauson entered looking, as usual, very beautiful. Horace and Herbert rose and greeted her with solemn gallantry. They were always particularly attentive and courteous to Sir Maingay's second wife. This the lady attributed to her charms. She was quite wrong. The Talberts were only anxious to show that if Sir Maingay chose to marry again it was a matter of no concern to them.

Lady Clauson was told the news. She turned to her husband triumphantly. As many better bred people sometimes do, she forgot herself. "I always told you she would do something disgraceful," said her ladyship.

"My dear! my dear Isabel!" said Sir Maingay. He glanced timidly at his brothers-in-law.

Horace and Herbert rose like two figures worked by one spring. Their calm eyes looked down their straight noses and concentrated their gaze on Lady Clauson, who turned very red.

“Madam,” said Horace, “the members of our family, and, I believe I may say, of Sir Maingay’s family, are not in the habit of doing disgraceful things. Beatrice may have left us unadvisedly, but I am certain her reason, if known, would meet with her father’s and with our approval.”

Lady Clauson at once saw her mistake and apologised humbly—an apology which the brothers accepted gracefully. Then after having been shown the nursery treasures they took their leave.

“Maingay does not improve as he grows older,” said Horace. Herbert shook his head mournfully as one who wished to gainsay a fact but dare not.

Lady Clauson, in spite of her apology,

told her husband that Beatrice had done something disgraceful. "Oh no, my dear," said Sir Maingay. "It's only a freak. You know, I won't say for what reason, she can't come back here to live. Well, she's grown tired of life down at Oakbury. I don't wonder at it. Horace and Herbert are two regular old women. They darn their own stockings, make antimacassars, and all sorts of things. She was ashamed to say she was tired of the life, so went off on her own account."

Here was yet another motive attributed to Beatrice. Nothing is more risky than the attributing of motives. It is as dangerous as prophesying before the event.

## CHAPTER II.

## A WORD IN SEASON.

AFTER one or two unsuccessful attempts Carruthers found Mrs. John Rawlings installed behind the family counter at No. 142, Gray Street. She was very hard at work—no doubt endeavouring to make up for her husband's repeated absences. In her hands she held what appeared like a long salmon-coloured two-inch rope, which, by a dexterous twist of the wrist, or some manipulation only known to the initiated, she was rapidly transforming into ornamental and symmetrical festoons of those luscious articles of diet, sausages. Upon learning that Carruthers wished to speak to her in private,

she wiped her hands on a cloth, and lifting up a flap, or species of drawbridge, in the counter, begged he would step through and follow her up-stairs.

He did so, and was shown into what Mrs. Rawlings called the parlour; a room papered with a startling paper, carpeted with a dazzling carpet; furnished with imitation walnut chairs and couch upholstered in the brightest blue tapestry; the mantelpiece bearing a mirror in a burnished gilt frame, and, among other gay ornaments, a huge pair of those glass vases with suspended prisms known as lustres; the fire glowed very brightly, and was kept in order by a fender and fire-irons of flashing steel. It was, in fact, a room which appeared to open its eyes and glare at you as you entered. A man even more anxious and preoccupied than Frank was could not fail to be struck with the general effect. It would have been positively ungracious not to have noticed it.

"What a bright room !' he said.

"It is a bright room," said Mrs. Rawlings in a gratified way. "You see, sir, we often kill as many as thirty pigs before breakfast."

This seemed a digression without bearing upon the main subject. "Poor things!" said Frank, without making it clear whether he referred to the pigs or their slayers.

"At first, when I married Rawlings, I found it a melancholy business ; so I made up my mind to have everything away from the factory bright and cheerful."

"You have succeeded here," said Frank, as he took the azure-covered chair offered him.

"I hope so. You see, sir," continued Mrs. Rawlings, "every business has its drawbacks as well as its advantages. Many don't like the pork business, but it's a nice clean business—there's no dust about it like there is about baking. I hate dust of any sort."

At another time Carruthers might have been amused and have tried to draw this woman out, but he was now only anxious to hear about Beatrice, so he commenced his inquisition.

Yes ; Mrs. Rawlings had been at Blacktown. She had stayed at the "Cat and Compasses." She, or rather her husband, had believed a little boy to be their missing son. A young lady had called upon her one morning. She gave no name, but she was a tall young lady ; very handsome ; and with grey eyes ; beautifully dressed ; in fact quite a young lady. Yes, poor thing ! quite a lady.

Would Mrs. Rawlings tell her visitor what had been said or done at that interview ? Oh, no—never. The good woman shut her eyes, compressed her lips, and shook her head slowly and solemnly. The combined effects of these actions being meant to show that Beatrice's communica-

tion was for ever locked up in the sacred repository of her heart.

Mrs. Rawlings really meant to keep Beatrice's secret, and doubtless had no pressure been applied she would have kept it loyally. But unluckily she was one of those who have to struggle to retain a secret, not only its main body, but little corners which would slip out unawares. In trying to guard Beatrice's secret from her visitor's renewed questions, she was like one trying to pack a feather-bed into a travelling trunk ; as one part was pushed down another part rose up. The words " poor thing ! " applied to Beatrice had already raised Frank's curiosity to the highest pitch, and made him believe that the present inquiry was not collateral.

Was he justified in striving to learn what Beatrice wished hid ? He thought so. He loved her with pure, unselfish love ; so unselfish that he was not endeavouring to find



the cause of her flight for his own ends, but in order to be able to give her aid if she required it. Yes, the man who loved her had a right to try and learn all about the woman whom he believed loved him. Besides, had Beatrice in any way bound this woman to secrecy? He could scarcely believe it. He fancied that Mrs. Rawlings, as some people will, was making a mystery of nothing. Beatrice may have given her money to withdraw the absurd claim, and she was ashamed to confess the fact.

"Look here," said Carruthers. "I must and will know what took place between you and the lady. I warn you that by concealment you may do her the greatest wrong. You cannot harm her by telling the truth."

Again Mrs. Rawlings shut her eyes and shook her head.

Again Frank pressed her, again and again. She still kept her secret, but ever and anon, by means of some unguarded expression, let

a corner slip out. So much so that Frank fully realised the fact that Beatrice was driven to seek that interview by some great stress, some grievous need. He began to fancy that in spite of her denial in knowledge even of her name, Mrs. Rawlings might be able to tell all about the flight.

"Can you tell me where to find her?" he asked. "I warn you if you withhold her address from me you may do her a wrong which may never be repaired."

He spoke earnestly and impressively, fixing his eyes upon the woman as he spoke. He wished to learn from her looks whether she knew the address or not.

A sudden inspiration seized Mrs. Rawlings. Inspiration may come to a purveyor as well as to a poet. This young man, this eager young fellow, was the cause of all the shame and mischief—what secret was there to keep from him? He might be right: incalculable harm might follow her silence.

"You want to find her?" she asked.  
"You don't know where she is?"

"I want to find her. I shall never rest until I find her." His manner told Mrs. Rawlings that her inspiration was correct. She rose and spoke with real emotion.

"Yes, sir," she said, "go and find her. Go and do what is right. If you are the man, I think your conscience will tell you what to do. Oh, sir, make what amends you can while there is time. Life is uncertain. It is things of this sort which haunt a man on his death-bed."

The look of surprise which at first sat on Frank's face turned to one of something like horror. "Go on," he said hoarsely.

"Perhaps I am wronging you," went on the woman. "Perhaps you did not know all. She said the child was born in secrecy. Perhaps you never knew it. But go to her now, sir, and make what amends you can. It's not for me to speak, but what can a

gentleman want for his wife more than a beautiful, proud-looking young lady like this. Dear, dear! what she must have suffered, poor thing."

Carruthers was ghastly. His hands grasped the table for support. Mrs. Rawlings glanced at him and felt that her impromptu oration was doing its work.

"There, don't take on so," she said kindly. "There may be excuses for you. Old people oughtn't to judge the young too severely."

"Tell me all she said, every word," gasped Carruthers. He had forced the woman to give him this bitter cup, and he meant to drain it to the dregs.

"Oh, poor dear! she told me all. Told me how she had been forced to make her secret known by my husband's claiming the child. My heart bled for her. She told me how no one knew about the baby; how she should have to let all be revealed unless

.

I helped her. She told me how she had longed for her child, and somehow, I don't know how, managed to get it to live with her or near her. Oh, it's such a pretty boy! Such a pretty boy, sir."

"Where can I find her?" asked Carruthers. Not that he now hoped to learn.

"Where? I suppose somewhere near the child, down at Blacktown. You know the lady's name. I don't. But you'll do what's right, won't you, sir?"

"Yes," said Frank. "I will do what is right. Thank you. Good morning."

He left the room, and departed by the way he had come. Mrs. Rawlings returned to her interesting occupation. She knew the name neither of her visitor nor of the lady whom she had seen at Blacktown, but to this day when she recalls the look of what she believed to be remorse on the young man's face, she is happy in the thought that it may be a few heart-felt and

appropriate words, though only spoken by a humble woman like herself, helped on the great fight of good against evil, righted a wrong, and made a sister woman happier. May such a mistake occur to many of us. It causes consolation.

A worthy soul Mrs. Rawlings. Nevertheless, we will now bid her adieu, and hope that the business in Gray Street continues to flourish.

But Frank Carruthers ! Poor Frank, whose researches had led him into such straits. Who had learnt the terrible half-truth which by a paradox is often greater than the whole. Carruthers walked and walked—out of Gray's Road—on and on—without heeding whither. Such grief as he felt to-day was a new experience in a man's life. When some three months ago Beatrice told him she could not love him, the shock, as we know, was great, but in spite of it Beatrice was still the Beatrice of his dreams.

Then there was hope ; there is always hope in such cases. But now none ! Not a vestige !

He laughed bitterly as he thought of the hours he had spent endeavouring to find the cause of what he had called Beatrice's complaint—of her general apathy and indifference to the world at large. Now he had got at the very germ of the disease. No wonder she was cold and reserved with such a secret to carry—such a dread overhanging her. Poor girl ! Poor girl !

He could see how the boy's coming to Hazlewood House had been arranged. Through Mrs. Miller, of course. And by his new light he was able to explain a discrepancy which had always troubled him. On the night when she bade him hope and wait, the nurse had told him that Beatrice had saved her years ago from starvation, whereas Horace had told him, that until she came to the house she was a stranger to

them all. He had not thought it worth while to pursue the inquiry.

She, this strangely-mannered woman, had made him promise to wait. Wait for what? There was nothing to wait for. Even if he, as he scornfully told himself he could, should forget his manhood and be willing to take Beatrice as his wife even now, he knew that a barrier, never to be climbed, would be raised by her. He did not wrong her in this. He knew that for all that had befallen she was mourning in mental sackcloth and ashes. He had no blame to give her, no stone to cast.

She had not tried to win his love. She had not accepted that love when offered. Too well he knew why. Yet he knew also that she loved him—loved him but would never be his. The thought drove him half mad. No friend of Carruthers's would have known him as, with heavy brows and



bent head, he walked through those quiet streets of suburban London.

But why the flight? No new dread, no new danger could have threatened her. Did she after all fly because he was coming to Hazlewood House? Did she fear that her resolution must give way, and with one breath she must avow her love, and with the next tell her lover that love could not be between them? No. A word from her would have stayed his coming. She had even as good as asked him to come. She was not flying from him.

Then the thought of that man who was seeking her came to his mind. He shuddered and bit his lip; he knew not why. But his first thought was to trace this unknown man and hear why he wanted Beatrice.

His mood changed. He would not seek him. He had no more to learn. After what he had this morning heard all in-

quiries, all information, could but tend to make him more miserable. There was nothing now left for him in the world but sheer hard work. Work, work, work, the greatest blessing ever given to man.

So he walked on and on, almost crying in his anguish, almost raving at his utter helplessness to mend matters. But all the while, do what he could to tear his idol out of her shrine, thinking of her as the calm, fair, stately girl he had known and loved, the one of all the world against whom slander should raise no voice.

Before his aimless walk was ended his mood had grown soft and pitying. Anger had simply faded away. All he could now think of was Beatrice and her sorrow. All he asked was to be able to see her and tell her there was one who would ever be as a brother to her. The wild resolve that he would now acquiesce in her disappearance as calmly as did her uncles disappeared.

He would find her. He would go to her, take her hand, tell her the secret was his, counsel her, and if it were possible stand between her and what she had to bear.

But he knew now, or thought he knew, the utmost that life had to give him, and he saw in it a sorry substitute for what it had seemed to promise only a few days ago.

Blame her! Why should he blame her? How had she wronged him?

## CHAPTER III.

## A HELPING HAND.

To make up one's mind ; to vow to find a young woman who has disappeared without leaving a trace, is one thing—to find her is another. The world is a place of considerable size, and chance meetings are not so common as the confiding novel reader is asked to believe. Such was at least the experience of two men, who, from different motives, were equally anxious to find the fugitive. The first Maurice Hervey, the second Frank Carruthers.

Hervey, who, having paid a second visit to Oakbury, had in some way managed to learn that Beatrice, the boy and the nurse

had gone to London, bade a hasty adieu to Blacktown and returned to the capital. The more he studied the situation the more apparent it became that, to use his own words, he was in a cleft stick. So long as Beatrice could conceal her whereabouts from him, so long was he utterly helpless. He could, of course, compass a certain amount of revenge, but the cost would be too terrific. However sweet a thing may be, it may be bought too dearly. He could walk boldly up to Sir Maingay Clauson and proclaim himself his son-in-law. He could go to these Talberts and show them that he married their niece when she was little more than a school-girl. But what good would this do? His bolt would be shot, and his quiver held no other. It might bring down Beatrice but not her money. He would have to deal with men of the world instead of a woman over whom he held the terror of exposure. He had one article to sell,

silence. There was one customer for it, his wife. With her he could trade to advantage, but the moment he broke luck for another market his commodity became all but valueless.

Again, there was that cursed clause in old Talbert's will. Hervey could easily prove that Beatrice was his wife, but in doing so he also proved that she had married, when under age, without her trustees' consent, and the said trustees could do almost exactly as they liked with her fortune. Probably they would throw him two hundred a year so long as he kept out of the way. What was two hundred a year when we know that had he not insisted on bringing some one's head down to the dust he might have had ten times the amount? Why had he not taken the money and foregone his revenge?

In fact, Beatrice's flight, although not effected for strategical reasons, was a

masterpiece; a move which bound her enemy hand and foot. Savagely he looked forward to the time when circumstances would force him to take the best offer made him. Well he knew that the moment Beatrice nerved herself to reveal the truth to her friends, the moment she elected to confess her girlish folly, and face what shame and blame might be due to her, every shred of power he held would be gone. It was, therefore, imperative he should find Beatrice and re-open negotiations upon a basis more favourable to her. Reflection and the risk he now ran of losing everything made him inclined to lower his demands. He would take fifteen hundred, even a half of his wife's income, and if she wished it, would enter into a regular deed of judicial separation. He would be silent so long as the money was paid or so long as it paid him better to be silent.

What if he gave out that he was dead and waited until she had married again? Then his sway would be supreme. But to gain this advantage he must lie silent, it might be for years, and in the mean time must somehow make a living. Perhaps, after her former experience, she would not marry again. Any way the state of his exchequer put a veto on the waiting scheme.

He expected no unextorted help from her. He looked for no mercy. He had showed none. He had blasted her life; robbed her years of early womanhood of their sweetness; he had traded on the romance which lies in the heart of every young girl, then, for mercenary purposes, had turned and crushed it out. He had shown her, nay, had, in brutal words, told her that he had married her to raise money in order to save himself from the penalty due to his crime. He well knew what he had done, and



knowing this he had not even ventured at attempting to cajole her when they measured strength at Blacktown. Had it been needed the stern set of her features, the scorn of her manner would have told him that he had no mercy to expect, that it was a duel between the two.

He must find her! As the months went on the necessity of finding her became more and more obvious. He had, after the manner of a gambler, who feels that any hour may bring the great stroke of luck, lived luxuriously. His money had by now so diminished that he saw he must shortly do one of three things—find Beatrice, earn money, or starve.

The first, the most desirable course in every way, seemed impossible. He had made, both in person and vicariously, such inquiries at Sir Maingay's house as could be made without exciting comment and suspicion. He had even been down once

more to Oakbury, seen the Talberts, but had learnt nothing to his advantage. So course number one could not be counted upon to meet the emergency.

Course number three, if the simplest, was the most unpleasant, so he was constrained to adopt number two ; at least, provisionally.

Before his disgrace Hervey had occasionally done some work for illustrated periodicals. As this branch of his late profession seemed to offer him the best chance of supplying his needs, he called upon two or three people whom he had known in former days, and who, moreover, knew what had caused his protracted absence. He simply said he was anxious to redeem the past and begged for a helping hand. Selfish as the world is supposed to be, there are many willing to help a fallen man on to his legs. Hervey received one or two promises which might or might not lead to remunerative work.

The months passed very dismally and drearily for the second seeker, Frank Caruthers. He knew not where to turn, where to look for Beatrice. However, he was better off than Hervey, for he had direct intelligence from her. Once a month she had written to her uncles, but her letters gave no clue that could be followed. They bore no address; they were posted in London; they mentioned no places; not even a country. She said she was living an exceedingly quiet, calm life. She longed to see dear old Oakbury again, and wondered if it would ever be her lot to do so. In each letter she regretted the necessity for the step she had taken, and hoped that if ever her uncles knew her true reason for it they would forgive her. She trusted, nevertheless, that they would never learn it. The only hints at locality in any one of her letters were that she mentioned that the weather was bitterly cold, and also that

she spent much time studying art; was, indeed, learning to paint in oils.

These letters Herbert, who felt sympathy for his cousin, sent on to Frank, and Frank perused them again and again, endeavouring by the light he had gained to read between the lines. And the more he read the more mystified he became. If Mrs. Rawlings' tale was true, there was something which Herbert and Horace never could, never would forgive; yet Beatrice wrote as if forgiveness was not an impossibility. Moreover, it struck Frank that her words expressed a doubt as to whether her uncles had learnt the reason for her flight. When should he find her? When should he learn the whole truth?

He searched her letters in vain for his own name, for any message to him. The omission troubled him, not because he thought himself forgotten, but because it showed him that Beatrice felt there was a

fate, which nothing could overcome, keeping them apart. So her letters gave him no hope.

Had he been an idle man Frank Carruthers could never have borne those months of suspense. But he was hard, very hard at work on a second book. Believe me, a man does not write his worst when his heart is sad. A deficiency of the gastric juice or a superabundance of lithic acid may ruin a man's work, but not necessarily grief. Toothache may prove fatal to inspiration, but heartache need not. So pending the appearance of his first book, which had for some reason been delayed, Frank was busy with a successor.

About that first book, a satirical semi-political novel, which, by-the-bye, made a great hit, Mr. Carruthers, like all new writers, was as nervous and fidgety as a young husband whose beloved wife is for the first time about to increase the popula-

tion. One day it struck him that the great work would be more taking if adorned with illustrations. He mentioned his idea to the publishers, who quite agreed with him, only adding that six full page illustrations would cost so many pounds, an expense they did not feel justified in incurring. But if Mr. Carruthers liked to bear the cost, well and good. Frank, who had money to spare, said he would see for how much he could get them done.

He called upon a friend, a Mr. Field, who knew all about such matters, and inquired where he could find hands competent yet not too costly. And this friend happened to be one of those from whom Maurice Hervey had begged a helping hand. So it will be seen that the hereinafter mentioned meeting between Carruthers and Hervey was, like all so-called chance meetings, when traced back to its cause, quite a natural sequence. Indeed, it is hard to

see how things could have happened otherwise.

"There, a fellow called on me a day or two ago," said Mr. Field, "a fellow who's down on his luck now. He might suit you."

"Can you recommend him? What is his name?"

"I don't know that I can recommend him, but you may give him a trial. He calls himself Henry Morris. He's down on his luck, as I said."

"Write him a line and ask him to call on me," said Carruthers, who liked to help men down on their luck. "Is he clever?"

"He's been idle so long I can't say. Look here, Carruthers, make him do the drawings on approval; and if I were you I wouldn't give any money on account."

"Send him to me and I'll talk to him." Carruthers was just leaving the room when his friend called him back.

"I say, Carruthers, I'd better tell you, then you can't say I didn't. This chap has been in quod five years for forgery. His name's Maurice Hervey. I suppose he's out now on ticket-of-leave. He tells me he means to run straight for the future. Now you know all about it and can please yourself."

The consequence was that Carruthers, who held the same belief as him with "the harp of divers tones," resolved to see this man, and, moreover, to treat him as if he had no knowledge of his antecedents. He was glad to help any one back to the straight path.

Carruthers, who hated the bother of catering for himself, still lived at his hotel. He had taken an office in a quiet street some little way off. Here he spent the greater part of the day, writing his new book, correcting those delightful objects, the proofs of a first book, or thinking sadly



of Beatrice's and his own lot. This office was on the first floor, and approached by a steepish, straight flight of uncarpeted stairs.

One morning he heard feet on the stairs ; heard them stop on the little landing in front of the door which bore his name. Some one knocked, and Frank shouted "Come in." To his supreme astonishment in walked the man who had demanded Beatrice's address and so outraged old Whittaker's sense of dignity.

"What do you want?" asked Frank brusquely.

Hervey explained that Mr. Field had written to him and instructed him to call, so Carruthers knew that the man who was so anxious to find Beatrice was a forger, felon, and ticket-of-leave man. He raised his head and coldly scrutinised his visitor.

Hervey until that moment had not recognised him. He did so then, and knew that the recognition was mutual. All question

of the original purpose which had brought about this meeting faded from the mind of each man. With each Beatrice was the one thought.

"Will you give the address I wanted when last we met?" asked Hervey eagerly.

"I will not," answered Carruthers shortly. He did not this time assert his inability to oblige his questioner, because he was unwilling to confess that Beatrice's present abode was a secret kept even from her own friends. He had also made up his mind that nothing should tempt him to ask this ex-convict a single question. An attempt to get at the truth through such a medium as this would be a degradation, an insult to the woman he loved.

His visitor took the blunt refusal very badly. The truth is, that Mr. Hervey's temper was not improving, or rather, his command of it was, from a sustained course of cigars and whiskey and water, growing

fitful and intermittent. Besides, Carruthers had a way with him which was particularly irritating to those who had the misfortune to quarrel with him. On a previous occasion Hervey had found it almost more than he could put up with. However, with the exception of slapping his hand on Frank's table he controlled himself for the present.

"I must insist upon your telling me," he said; "I have to make an important business communication to Miss Clauson."

Carruthers smiled contemptuously. "Her trustees, the Messrs. Talbert of Oakbury, manage Miss Clauson's business, I believe. Or you might go to the family solicitor, whose name I will give you."

"My business is of a private nature. I demand this address. I have a right to ask it."

Carruthers shrugged his shoulders, elevated his eyebrows in true Talbert fashion, and again smiled that irritating smile.

“My good sir,” he said, “cannot you understand that I absolutely refuse to gratify you? That a gentleman is not justified in giving every one who asks it a lady’s address? Go to Sir Maingay Clauson, he is the proper person to apply to. As to rights, I am certainly within my own if I ask you to leave my room. No doubt you see that the business which gave me the pleasure of this visit cannot be carried through.”

Hervey scowled, hesitated, and then walked out of the room. He was wise in so doing, as he might have said more than he intended; and a premature disclosure, indeed, a disclosure at all, of the truth would entirely ruin his clouded prospects. As, from lack of politeness, or flurry of discomfiture, he left the door ajar, Carruthers rose and walked across the room to close it. Just then the door opened and the two men confronted each other on the threshold.

"If you write to Miss Clauson will you give her a message from me?" asked Hervey with forced civility.

"That depends exactly upon what the message may be."

"Will you tell her that I called on you and said the matter could now be easily arranged? There's no harm in that."

"There seems none. When I write I'll give it."

"You'd better mention my real name. It's not Henry Morris—It's—"

"I am acquainted with your real name," said Frank with perfect nonchalance. Hervey grew very angry.

"Now I wonder who you may be," he said, "you who write to her. Perhaps you're sweet on each other, and look forward to a happy marriage." An incautious remark of the rogue's, yet one he could not refrain from making; nor could he refrain from eyeing Carruthers to see how the

shot told. Hard as the effort was, Caruthers preserved his equanimity.

"Perhaps so," he said carelessly. "I can't, however, imagine it can be of the slightest interest to you." The scornful emphasis laid on the last word flicked Hervey like a whip.

"Perhaps so!" he echoed with his mocking laugh. "Ha, ha! do you think I'm a fool? Do you think you take me in with your studied ease? Don't I know you're dying to know who I am and all about me!"

"I know a good deal already," said Frank, in scathing tones. "If I felt any wish to know more I should apply at Scotland Yard, or wherever the proper office may be."

This taunt was more than even the most amiable ticket-of-leave man could be expected to let pass. It finished Hervey entirely. He boiled over. With the violent expletive which invariably accompanies

such an act he struck out full at the speaker.

This Carruthers was one of those deceptive men who at first glance give little promise of much strength. Yet if his frame was spare his shoulders were square, and all the weight he carried was bone and muscle. He may be summed up in the simple word wiry ; and wiry men, as many a muscular-looking athlete knows to his cost, are not adversaries to be despised. He was far from being one of those marvellous creatures, usually officers in the Guards, who, in fiction at least, can crush up silver flagons, toss with one hand a sixteen stone ruffian over a ditch or a railing, but all the same he had his fair share of manly strength.

After parrying Hervey's blow, he simply jerked out his right arm to the very best of his knowledge and agility, throwing the whole weight of his body into it, and, in

the language of what may now be called the revived prize-ring, "got well home."

These were the only two blows struck, and for this reason: Hervey, when he received Frank's blow, was standing on the landing. He staggered back and went headlong down the steep stairs. It seemed as if his neck must be broken. However, he gathered himself up, groaned as in pain, shook his fist at the victor, swore, and then found his way out. Carruthers returned to his papers, but the reflections to which this interview gave rise made his afternoon a blank so far as literary work went.

Two days after this his friend Field called on him. "I say, Carruthers," he exclaimed, "you're a nice sort of young man. I sent a fellow who wanted a helping hand to you, and, hang me! you gave it to him with a vengeance. Helped him down, not up, though."

"He's been to you, has he?"



"Yes, he called to-day—in splints. Said you insulted him and chucked him over the stairs. Can't think how you did it. Doesn't seem like you either."

"I had the best of reasons."

"So I told him, but he won't believe me. You've broken his fibula or tibula, or his tih and fibula."

"His leg! I saw the blackguard walk away."

"Perhaps I'm not right about the names. His arm is broken. He vows he will have compensation. Go to law, etcetera."

"I don't think he will," said Carruthers, significantly.

"Perhaps not, if your reasons were good ones. I don't ask them; but look here, old fellow. He's got no money, and won't be able to earn any for a while. Don't you think you ought to do something for him?"

"No, I don't," said Frank; "but I will. Keep the fellow away from me. But you

can pay his doctor's bill and let him have a pound or two a week until he gets all right again."

Field laughed. "You'll find it a costly amusement breaking bones like this."

"My dear Field," said Frank, "if you knew all I know, you'd think it was cheap at the price in this particular case."

So by a strange irony of fate for some weeks Maurice Hervey was fed and doctored at the expense of Frank Carruthers.

## CHAPTER IV.

“I CANNOT LIVE THIS LIFE!”

BEATRICE was at Munich. Munich, that city for its size, perhaps, the most regal capital in Europe. Munich, with its fair streets, noble statues, palaces old and new, libraries, museums, art galleries, and fast fleeting reputation for cheap living. Munich, which stands boldly out on a barren plain, no doubt feeling it has little which it need be ashamed to show to the world, except perhaps the vagaries of the eccentric being its king.

Beatrice never quite knew what induced her to choose the capital of Bavaria for her resting-place. Honestly, when she wrote

from London to her uncles, she had not settled whither to wend her way. She might then just as likely have gone to Paris, Brussels, Vienna, or Berlin, as to Munich.

She fixed on Germany for various reasons. She had that feeling which, justly or unjustly, is common to most English people, that an unprotected and not unattractive woman is more free from annoyance in a German than in a French town. She also fancied she knew the German language better than she knew French. The scientific severity of the great Teutonic tongue had always charmed her. She had studied it deeply. She could read it in its classic forms with a certain amount of facility. She believed she could speak it well enough for the purposes of ordinary conversation. Alas! she was but one of the many who, when gutturals, compound words, and divisible participles are flying about like hail,

find what a fraud is the boasted phonetic spelling, and what an age it takes to feel at one's ease amid the elephantine gambols of the unwieldy language. Nevertheless, for the above and other reasons she chose Germany.

As the party had left Blacktown provided with no travelling indispensables, except the most important of all, money, many purchases had to be made in London. All were, however, made in time to catch the evening train to Dover, and that night Beatrice and her charges crossed the Channel. Then it seemed to her she was once more able to breathe. In London she had been haunted by the dread that Hervey would follow and find her. Once out of England she felt safe.

Be it understood that Beatrice was not flying from the shame which a revelation of her foolish marriage and subsequent act of deception would entail; although she

would willingly have paid a large yearly sum, so long as her husband left her in peace and kept the secret. Gladly would she have made some arrangement which would spare her pride the mortification of her being known as the wife of a felon. Gladly would she have done all in her power to save her father, her uncles, and such friends as she had, the pain they must feel when all was revealed. Yet it was not on this account she fled. Her one aim was to save the child from the man who was his father.

She believed he could legally claim her boy. She knew he was villain enough to take him by force or fraud if the chance occurred. The moment Harry was in Hervey's hands she saw she would be at his mercy. She would be forced to submit to any conditions, howsoever exacting and humiliating, in order to regain possession of the one thing which was left her, the one

thing she could love, or was permitted to love. Flight gave her a respite; gave her time for consideration. It was the simplest and easiest way out of the difficulty. So she decided upon it.

Once out of England they travelled by easy stages, and eventually reached their destination—Munich. The city on inspection seemed as suited as any other to Beatrice's need, so she hired a furnished flat, engaged a good-tempered, handy Bavarian servant, and settled down to that quiet calm life which she had in her letters to the Talberts described herself as living.

These letters were sent under cover to a friend of Mrs. Miller's, who posted them in London. As English stationery can be procured on the Continent as easily as everything else that is English, the letters conveyed no information which could be used to discover the retreat. Beatrice dreaded sending them; she feared that

some unforeseen slip connected with them might disclose her abode. But it seemed so unkind not to let her uncles know she was alive and well. She did not write to her father. She fancied her proceedings would not trouble him much, and felt sure that any letter sent to him would run the gauntlet of Lady Clauson's unkind comments. She trusted to Horace and Herbert to let him know all that they knew.

Beatrice made few, if any, chance acquaintances. Some people never do. Just as there are men whom other men never think of asking for a cigar-light, so are there women to whom other women do not make the first advances. Beatrice, with her reserved but polite manner, classical features, and distinguished bearing, no doubt conveyed the idea that she was a state not to be encroached upon without the passport of an introduction.



So for society she had her boy and her faithful slave, Mrs. Miller.

However much a mother may love her child, she is not blamed if she finds that his constant company does not give all the pleasure the world can give. However faithful and intelligent a servant may be, the mistress may with a clear conscience look beyond her for a companion.

So Beatrice's life grew once more dismal and colourless. So much so, that under its present conditions the late life at Hazlewood House, when contrasted with it, seemed a wild round of variety and dissipation.

She had her books and her music, but she had no one with whom to discuss the books, no one to listen to her music. She took lessons in painting from one of the thousand artists in the great art-centre, Munich, but this was but an aid to kill time, and unbroken with any ambitious aim. She had her thoughts. These she

shunned as much as possible. It seemed to her that there was nothing upon which she could look back with pleasure, nothing to which she could look forward with hope. She often recalled Carruthers's assertion that, in spite of manner, she must have some dream of happiness, and she sighed as she thought that now less than ever did life show any joy of which she even dared to dream.

Beatrice was sitting one afternoon in the room she called her studio. She was alone and in deep thought. She had just finished one of her periodical letters to her uncles. It was lying near her, directed but not sealed. Beatrice was wrestling with the temptation of sending a message to Frank. She could not bear to picture him thinking her cold and heartless. Should she add a line to her letter? Should she even write him a letter? But what could she say to him? Nothing, absolutely nothing!

Besides, provided he had not yet learned the truth, the most conventional message from her would raise hopes never to be realised. Poor Frank! why did he learn to love her? Why did she love him? No, not that! She was happy that she loved him; that she had found the power of loving and trusting still hers. Yes, hopeless as such love was, she rejoiced that she could love such a man as Frank. But no word, no message must be sent.

"It is a part of the price I must pay for my folly," she said as she sealed her letter. Her eyes were full of tears as she did so. Mrs. Miller entered and saw her emotion.

"My sweet, my dear," she said; "what is it? There is no fresh trouble?"

"None, the old one is enough," said Beatrice. Mrs. Miller looked at her solicitously.

"You are thinking of the man who loves you?" she said soothingly.

"Yes," said Beatrice with recovered composure. "Yes, I am thinking that I may have wrecked his life as well as my own."

"No, no, my poor dear. It will come right. You will be happy—he will be happy."

Beatrice smiled a hopeless smile.

"It will be—it is written," continued Mrs. Miller. "Nothing can change it. God's arm is not shortened. His purpose——"

Beatrice checked her sternly. Since Sarah's outbreak in the train all signs of fanaticism had been at once repressed by Beatrice. "My letter is ready," she said; "take it and direct it to your friend. There are envelopes."

Sarah glanced at her mistress, who was once more deep in thought. She took two envelopes and also a stray half sheet of note-paper. Then she went into another room, and hastily writing a few words on the paper placed it in an envelope, addressed

it, and inclosed it, with Beatrice's letter, in the packet which was to go to her friend in London.

Beatrice resumed her painful train of thought. Writing home had made her feel utterly wretched. It was now May; nearly five months had she been living this dreary life, and keeping every one in ignorance as to where she was. How much longer must it go on? She could, of course, leave Munich whenever she thought fit, but every other place would be just as dreary to her. Locality matters little when a sea of trouble surrounds one. Let a man count up his happiest days, and he will find the place in which he spent them contributed not much to their happiness. Beatrice, who was now somewhere about twenty-three, had most certainly a right to expect some happy days in this world.

She began to ask herself the questions which had recently been framing themselves

in her mind. Had she after all acted in the wisest way? Was her life to be quite marred by that one act of folly? If she turned and firmly grasped her nettle, would the sting be fatal, or even more than she could bear? She was, like most of us, a blending of contradictions. She was wise and foolish; brave and timid; proud and humble, as pressure of circumstances forced her to be. She began to loathe this hiding, this shrinking into corners. Could she nerve herself to come forth and face the worst?

What was the worst? The worst was her dread of losing her child. What if she wrote to Horace and Herbert and told them everything, begged them to forgive the harmless deceit which she had practised; entreated them to see this man and make such terms as they could? Might she not, when they had assured her security and peace, face such scorn as the world would throw her?

Then she began to wonder if Hervey had revealed the truth? If her father, Lady Clauson—here she shuddered—her uncles knew that she was this man's wife. Although she had just been resolving to make it known to them, the thought of their being in possession of the knowledge was horrible to her. Yet all this while they might have known it—might have heard it from Hervey's lips. This thought half maddened her. She must learn if it was so.

She thought regretfully of that peaceful life at Hazlewood House. Horace and Herbert's little womanish ways seemed part and parcel of the pleasant home. She thought of old Whittaker, of William Giles, of the other servants. She thought, with a pang of deeper regret, of Sylvanus Mordle, who had also found in her the woman he could love. She even thought of young Purton's well-meant but unsophisticated

advances. Then, of course, she thought of Carruthers—thought of him more than of all.

And Frank? Did Frank know, and if so, what did he think of her? Or, when he knew, what would he think of her? Did he, would he, curse her very memory? Ah, so far as her love was concerned there could be no hope for better days!

At this juncture Beatrice broke down, just as she had broken down when she refused Frank's love. She laid her head on the table and sobbed bitterly. Sarah returning from posting her letter found her so, and of course knelt beside her, cried with her, and soothed her.

"I cannot live this life!" sobbed Beatrice. "I cannot live it longer!"

"My pretty dear! my poor darling!" said the woman, her hard features transfigured by pity, and smoothing the girl's brown hair as a mother might have done.



"I can bear it no longer," said Beatrice. "I will write and tell them all. Tell them how I have been wronged—how I have wronged them. No," she exclaimed, starting to her feet, "I cannot do it. There must be other means. He is mercenary. Oh, I will give him all if he will keep silent and leave me in peace—leave me and the boy in peace."

"Let me go to England and see him," said Sarah.

"You!" Beatrice started at the idea.

"Yes. Let me go. He is a wicked man, but he can do me no harm. Oh, my dear mistress, let me go. I can hear what he wants—make him promise and put that down in writing. Let me do this for you, my dear. By the love I bear you I ask it."

"How could you find him?"

"He is sure to be in London. If not there's those who can tell me where to find

him. Say I may go. Let me go to-day—to-morrow."

Beatrice mused. After all, the suggestion did not seem so absurd. Sarah was by no means a fool. She could travel to England alone perfectly well. She could hear what this man asked now. Why should she not let her go?

Mrs. Miller seemed on thorns of suspense. "Say I may go," she whispered.

"I will think. I will tell you by and by. Send my boy to me, I will think with him in my arms."

So the "shorn lamb," as he was now called, came to his mother, and all the afternoon Beatrice considered Mrs. Miller's proposal. The more she considered the more inclined she felt to give it her countenance.

In the evening she told her she might go. She gave her many instructions which were not to be exceeded. She was to find Hervey

and hear his demands. She was to be firm, and above all have it clearly understood that he must sign a deed of separation, in which he relinquished all claim to the boy. Mrs. Miller nodded grimly. She was not likely to err on the side of mercy.

“Take plenty of money,” said Beatrice. “Give him money if he asks for it. Make him understand that I have not concealed myself to save my money. That he can always have.”

So it was arranged. Fully one half of that night was spent by Mrs. Miller on her knees. She was alone—Harry slept with his mother as often as with his nurse—so she could offer up her wild prayers without interruption. If ever a fanatic wrestled with the Supreme Being in prayer it was Sarah Miller that night. For what did she pray? Perhaps it is as well not to ask, but to be contented with the assurance that she prayed for Beatrice’s happiness.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE MADONNA DI TEMPI.

BEATRICE's letter, after having been perused and commented upon by the Talberts, was sent on to Frank Carruthers. A note from Herbert was inclosed with it. "You will see"—he wrote—"that this letter is as unsatisfactory as its predecessors. It gives us absolutely no information as to where she is or why she left us. Now that we are assured of her being well, and, we suppose, safe, our feeling about her prolonged and unexplained absence is more than regret—it is in fact serious annoyance. We find it quite a strain to answer inquiries about her without contradicting one another."

Naturally the envelope which bore Herbert's handwriting was the first opened by Carruthers, and of course he read Beatrice's letter before he read Herbert's. He searched the former in vain for his own name, little thinking how the writer had sat for a long time before she could bring herself to seal her letter without sending him a crumb of comfort. He then read Herbert's commentary and smiled faintly as he drew a ludicrous picture of Horace and Herbert making counter-statements to their friends. He mused a while, holding Beatrice's letter in his hand. Her fingers had touched that sheet of paper ; so he actually pressed it to his lips, and in doing so caught a faint lingering odour of what he remembered was her favourite perfume. It was clear that Mr. Carruthers's disease was as rampant as ever.

By and by he turned to see what else Fate had brought him. Now-a-days Fate

shoots many of her arrows from the General Post Office. Carruthers found among other letters one addressed in a woman's handwriting. It had been sent to Oxford and at Oxford re-directed to London. He opened it carelessly and found it contained a half-sheet of note-paper, on which was written "Remember your promise. Wait, oh, be patient and wait!"

Carruthers threw it aside with a bitter smile. He well knew who was the writer. Wait! What was there to wait for? However, the sight of those words brought back the memory of that strange nocturnal visit; of the woman's earnest, even impassioned appeal to him, to "wait five, ten, twenty years for the one he loved." Why should she write now and repeat the appeal? She who knew everything; she who had accompanied Beatrice and who was probably with her now.

He could not get the memory of that

strange creature with her dreary belief, yet unswerving faith as to his own future, from his mind. At the time the woman's earnestness had impressed him more than he cared to confess. Superstition is a quality to the possession of which no man of our time is willing to own, not even to himself. Yet nine men out of ten are superstitious.

Carruthers told himself that such hope as he had gathered from Mrs. Miller's words was simply gathered because he believed her to be in Beatrice's confidence. Here it was wrong. It was the woman's broad but absolute assertion, uttered with the passionate inspiration of a prophetess of old, that happiness in this world awaited him and Beatrice, which had been of aid to him in his trouble. If faith can move stubborn mountains, why not a heart which is willing enough to move in a particular direction ?

And now this woman repeated her message, and, as Carruthers read the letter,

told him his case was no more hopeless than it was months ago.

He took the note which he had crumpled up and tossed away ; he spread it out and read it again. He found, moreover, that it was written on paper similar to that used by Beatrice, and upon turning it over he saw on the back a few words in pencil. They were written so faintly that he had to carry the note to a strong light in order to decipher them.

The words were "*Madonna di Tempi*," and to the best of his belief, as experts say when giving evidence, the handwriting was Beatrice's.

What did the words mean, and how far would they aid him in finding Beatrice ? He soon settled in his mind that *Madonna di Tempi* must be the name of a picture. But what picture ? Where was it to be found ?

Of course it did not follow that supposing



he could ascertain all about this picture, which might or might not be a world-famed one, that he would find Beatrice near it. Nevertheless the clue was worth following. He would have followed a finer clue than this to the end of the world on the chance of its leading him to Beatrice. So he at once set about the task of getting information, if information could be got, respecting a picture called the *Madonna di Tempi*. He hoped, but his hopes were not very strong. Indeed, he could not help comparing his case to that of the fair Saracen's, who found her lover by the aid of two words. Yet she was better off than he was. She at least had the name of a place for one of her talismanic words. He had the name of what he supposed to be a picture ; nothing more.

Mr. Carruthers was not one of the inner circle of art worshippers. His sallet, his

*sturm und drang*, his emotional days, were well over before the era of blue and white china. He had no rhapsodies, written or spoken, to arise hereafter and prick his conscience. He had not bowed his knee to the intense, nor sacrificed on the altar of the incomprehensible. He was fond of pictures as pictures, and was bold enough to say he liked what he did like and that he disliked what he did dislike. Hence it will be at once seen that his opinion was worth nothing to any one except himself.

Having found the knowledge not indispensable, he could not, like many men, check off on his fingers the principal productions of the grand old masters and name the spot of earth on which each one could be found. But like the man who, when challenged to fight, replied "I can't fight myself, but I have a little friend who can," and forthwith struck down his challenger with a short, stout poker, Mr. Carruthers,

if he did not know these things himself, had a friend who knew.

This friend was a Mr. Burnett, a recognised art authority. Now it is an accepted truth that an art authority is born, not made; at least no one has yet discovered the method of manufacture. He steals upon the world full grown, the great mother Art's exponent. He is recognised. He is kind and benignant. He takes our hands and guides us, shows us what to praise and what to blame. We are grateful, and, if we are rich, regulate our purchases according to his word.

Frank found Mr. Burnett at his rooms, writing—critiques on the recently opened exhibitions most likely. Burnett was a tall man, at least six feet high. He was portly and filled his round-backed study chair most thoroughly. His face was round and cleanly shaved. He was slightly bald. His eyes were blue and looked at you in a way which

gave promise of humour. Taking him altogether he was the last man whom, judging by his writings and renown, you would have expected to be Mr. Burnett, and a certain artist who, objecting to some of his views, spoke of him as an "emaciated apostle of æstheticism," could not have enjoyed his personal acquaintance.

"Why, Carruthers!" he said, in a soft but rich voice. "So it is. I haven't seen you for an age. Sit down, my dear fellow. Have a smoke?"

He pushed across the cigar box. The cigar box, or its substitute the cigarette box, is in the social transactions of modern life rapidly taking the place once filled by the snuff box of our respected ancestors.

"Got a book coming out," continued Burnett. "Your publisher told me about it. They expect great things of it. Don't know that you ought to build on that. Oh yes, my dear Carruthers,"—Frank was about

to speak—"of course I'll do anything I can for you. I am afraid it won't be much. But I think it's better to let every tub stand on its own bottom. If this thing be of——"

Here Carruthers managed to slip in a word. "I didn't know I'd asked you to do anything."

"But you're going to. A man who turns up after a long absence always comes to ask for something. I was only anticipating your request. I always consent beforehand when I can. Every one has to consent to do what he's asked. It shows much greater delicacy to forestall the demand."

"At any rate I didn't come to talk about my book."

"Impossible, my dear Carruthers! A first book, and not want to talk about it! Is modesty not yet extinct? Do talk about it—it's unnatural not to do so."

"Confound it!" said Carruthers. "Will you listen? I came to ask——"

"I knew you came to ask something ; my grief is that I did not guess what."

"You know a great deal about pictures, don't you?" said Carruthers not noticing the interruption.

Burnett wheeled round and looked at his friend. His eyes twinkled. "Ah, my dear Carruthers, there you have me. That is a question I ask myself day and night. Do I know a great deal about pictures? In confidence, my life would be happier if I could answer that question. My good fellow, the spectre, the Frankenstein that haunts my existence is the dread that some day I shall laud a work to the skies and find too late, too late, that it is a bad copy. This, Carruthers, is an anxiety you will be ever spared. Answer your own question for me and you will make me a happier man."

Frank laughed. "Well, you're supposed to know a great deal."

"That is a much better way of putting

it. I can answer that without outraging modesty. Supposing then that I am supposed to know—what follows?”

“I want to——”

“My dear Carruthers, my question was one of those interpolated phrases which an orator uses for the purpose of answering himself. I know perfectly well what you want. You have bought in a shop in some back slum, or, it may be, at a sale, a piece of old canvas or copper covered with certain pigments. You have bought it for a song. You have taken it home, looked at it in every light; you have wetted your fingers and rubbed them over portions of your purchase, and have found hidden beauties. You have looked through a magnifying glass and tried to find a signature. Now don't interrupt me, my dear fellow, I know the whole process. Belief as to the enormous value of your purchase has grown upon you, but you are not quite satisfied, so you have

come to show it to me, and at this moment a cab is standing at my door with your picture in it. Don't bother to carry it up. If you insist upon my looking at it just go down and hold it up; I'll look out of window."

"I didn't come in a cab," said Carruthers.

"Ah, then it's too large to bring to me. So much the worse for you, Carruthers. It's in your rooms of course, resting on a chair, in a strong light. Oh, yes, I'll look round some morning. You generally smoke good cigars and I suppose keep a drink handy. Don't apologise for troubling me. It will be no trouble. But about the picture; put it in your bedroom with its face to the wall. I needn't look at it. I can give you my opinion without seeing it. I assure you it is not genuine, my dear Carruthers—they never are."

"As I have not bought any picture—"  
began Carruthers.



"Oh, it's one you're going to buy, is it? Do you know, my dear Carruthers, I should be careful if I were you. I wouldn't go beyond five pounds unless it is a Titian, a Guido, a Raphael, or a Murillo. Then you might go to seven. Seven pounds is a nice limit for a picture buyer. I know a man who got together a charming gallery of old masters on a seven pound limit. Funny thing too, he had several genuine works in it."

"Lucky man!" said Frank, who began to see that he must let his friend go to the length of his tether. Mr. Burnett was not a rapid speaker but a continuous and a sustained one. He was one of those men whose words flow out so softly, so richly, and so pleasantly that it seems sacrilege to stop them.

"I don't see the luck, my dear Carruthers. His pictures cost him seven pounds apiece, and would no doubt sell for seven pounds

apiece. Of course it never occurred to you that a picture to fetch money must be more than genuine. It must have a pedigree. A picture without a pedigree is as worthless as a princess without one. A picture with a pedigree sells for heaven knows what, although it isn't genuine. My dear fellow, I know a man who gave twenty-two thousand pounds for a couple of pictures. They were bought abroad for six thousand, sent over in a special steamer. My friend heard about them, and being afraid some one would forestall him went down to Dover to meet them. He gave a cheque for the money without even unscrewing the cases. What do you think of that?"

"The dealer guaranteed the pictures, I suppose?"

"Guaranteed! How simple you are, Caruthers! Who can guarantee a picture except the artist who painted it? No, he

guaranteed that the cases contained two pictures which had hung in a nobleman's residence in a certain place, and which had formerly hung in another place, and which had belonged to So and So, and which were the two identical pictures mentioned by Horace Walpole or somebody else, as two of the finest examples of a certain artist, and so back and back. There was an unbroken pedigree. Well, my dear Caruthers, I was present when my friend opened the cases. That was because I knew the pictures and could assure him he had the right ones. I had, of course, seen them before, and when first I saw them I had the advantage of the reputed artist—he never saw them.”

“ You told your friend so of course.”

“ Certainly not. Who am I to dispute the verdict of those who went before me? The pictures were established, my dear fellow. Besides my friend had a very good

bargain. If his collection is ever sold they will fetch thirty thousand. But I'd stick to the seven pound limit if I were you. And now about this picture you want to buy?"

"I haven't the slightest intention of buying any picture."

"My dear Carruthers! I hope I haven't deterred you. I hope I have not nipped the incipient bud of art love."

"I say, Burnett," said Frank, growing desperate. "If you'd only condescend to listen—"

"Listen!" said Burnett with mock reproach, "my dear fellow, haven't I listened to every word you have said. Haven't I tried to counsel you to the best of my ability? Well, go on!"

"Do you know any picture called the *Madonna di Tempi*?" asked Carruthers hastily, and happy to get the question out at last.

"A picture called the *Madonna di Tempi*," echoed Burnett. "That's a good broad order, Carruthers. Now, who may that picture be by? An artist's name might aid my memory."

"If I knew the artist's name I shouldn't come bothering you. I should get my information first hand from Pilkington's dictionary or what book you use."

"No doubt you could. Any one can find information if he knows where to look for it. On that shelf you will find catalogues of all the European galleries. You can take them and look them through. About a week's employment I should say."

"I can't spare the time," said Frank. "If you can't tell me I will go and ask some one else. Only I thought you knew every picture in Europe."

Burnett's eyes twinkled. He laid his hand on Frank's arm. "My dear Carruthers," he said, "let me entreat you for

your own sake not to go rushing about and proclaiming your ignorance of art matters. Let that secret be deposited with me alone. I will guard it reverently."

"Tell me where the picture is," said Frank.

Burnett stretched out his arm and took a book off a shelf. He opened it and read as follows:—

"Both in tone and execution this beautiful work is closely allied to the celebrated *Madonna* of the House of Orleans. The colours are laid on thinly with a somewhat fuller impasto in the whitish light. It is impossible to conceive a more glossy finish united to more subtle modelling, or greater purity of colours of the richest tinge and most dazzling brightness. It is characterised by plump form, soft blending and spare impaste of flesh, bathed in vapour, and made transparent by delicate glazes. It is a true touch of nature which makes

the mother accompany the embrace with a look of tender affection, while the child receives the caress more mechanically and gazes straight out of the picture ?”

“There, my dear Carruthers, do you recognise it ? Is that your picture ?”

Frank fell into the humour. “It must be,” he said, gravely. “The plump form : the spare impaste, the bath of vapour. There cannot be two such. But set my doubts at rest.”

“Ah, yes. I see it is called the *Madonna di Tempi*. Painted by Raphael. You have heard of Raphael, Carruthers ?”

“Where is it ?” asked Frank quickly.

“It is in the Old Pinakothek.”

“In the what ?”

“My dear Carruthers, how ignorant you are. I thought you studied Greek at Oxford—Pinakothek is derived from a Greek word—”

“I know all that, but where is it ?”

"My dear Carruthers, you asked me what, not where. I was answering your question."

"But where is it?"

"Your ignorance is deplorable. The Old Pinakothek is in Munich. Munich, you may know, is the capital of—"

Frank jumped up, feeling he had been tormented long enough. "Thank you," he said, "I am so much obliged."

"Not going, Carruthers! Oh, sit down and have a chat. Tell me all about your book. You must be dying to tell me all."

"No, I'm not. I must go now. Good-bye."

"But where are you going?"

"The words you read have fired me. I am going to Munich to see the *Madonna di Tempi*." And before Mr. Burnett could get out another question Carruthers was gone.

The smallest slips ruin the most cleverly



devised schemes. The omission or the addition on a bill of exchange of a simple mark called a "tick," sent Messrs. Bidwell and Co. into retirement at the country's expense instead of enjoying the fat of a foreign land at the cost of the old lady of Threadneedle Street. An act of Beatrice's, that of pencilling down in an idle moment the title of a picture which had struck her fancy, brought Mr. Carruthers in hot haste to her hiding-place. Fate is turned by a feather !

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE TRUTH AT LAST.

CARRUTHERS reached Munich late at night. He went straight to that comfortable hotel the "Four Seasons," and, feeling that the hour was too late to begin his researches, supped and went to bed. In spite of his excitement at the thought of being in the same town as Beatrice, he slept soundly. Man is but mortal, and after travelling as fast as is possible from London to Munich, it takes a great deal to spoil a night's rest. So in the morning Carruthers arose refreshed and eager to begin the quest.

But how to begin it? He was not even

sure that its object was in Munich. Because she had written down the name of a picture it did not follow she was near that work of art. She might only have paid Munich a flying visit—might now be miles and miles away. He grew very despondent as he realised the slender, fragile nature of the clue which he had so impetuously taken up and followed. Nevertheless, he vowed he would not leave Munich until he felt sure it did not harbour the fugitives.

He stepped through the swinging doors of his hotel, and stood in the broad Maximilians-Strasse. He hesitated, uncertain what to do, which way to turn. So far as he could see, his only chance of finding Beatrice was meeting her in the public streets; his only plan was to walk about those streets until he met her. At any rate he would do nothing but this for the next few days. If unsuccessful he would then think whether he could apply to such

persons as might be able to tell him what strangers were living in Munich.

He turned to the right, went across the Platz, and into the fair Ludwig-Strasse. He walked on with palaces on either hand until he came to the gate of victory. Pre-occupied as Mr. Carruthers was, the number of magnificent buildings he passed greatly impressed him. However, he deferred his admiration until happier times.

A kind of superstition made him think it well to see the picture which had brought him so far. He inquired the way to the Old Pinakothek, and upon arriving there sought for and found the *Madonna di Tempi*. He stood for a long time contemplating it, not because he so much admired it as in the hope that fate might bring Beatrice to his side. She did not come, so he bade the *Madonna* adieu, and after having run quickly through the large rooms and cabinets in the hope of

encountering Beatrice, he left the building wishing that the living masterpiece he sought was as easy to find as that of the dead artist.

Keeping to what seemed the principal and most populous streets he found himself once more in front of his hotel. He started off in an opposite direction, went down the broad Maximillians-Strasse. More palaces, more statues, but no Beatrice. At last he stood on the stone bridge which spans the shallow but rapid Isar. He stopped and looked at the curious artificial bed of smooth planks over which the river runs ; and then he looked down into the little triangular pleasure-garden which lies between the two arms of the stream.

In the garden, on one of the seats, intently engaged with a book, sat Beatrice. Her little boy was playing near her. It needed not the sight of the boy to assure Carruthers he was not mistaken. Like all

lovers, he told himself he would have known that graceful head, that perfect form, at least a mile away. Yes, there was Beatrice ! The *Madonna* had not led him astray. Had Carruthers been a Roman Catholic he might have shown his gratitude by the expenditure of pounds and pounds of wax candles.

He stood for some time watching Beatrice. Now that he had found her, he trembled at his own act. He trembled at the thought of what he had to say to her, what she had to say to him. He comforted himself by the assurance that he had only sought her, broken through her concealment, for the sake of giving, or at least offering, such help as he could give.

After this he walked slowly down to the garden and stood in front of her. She raised her eyes and knew him. Her book fell to the ground. She sprang to her feet and uttered a little cry, a cry that sounded

very sweet to Mr. Carruthers, as it was unmistakably one of pleasure. At the unexpected appearance of the man she loved, for a moment there was no thought in her heart save that of joy. She stretched out her hands. "Frank! Frank!" she cried. "You here?"

He took her hands in his and, regardless of by-standers, gazed into her grey eyes. For a moment he could not speak. The sight of Beatrice, the touch of her hand sent the blood rushing through his veins. Days, weeks, months he had pictured this meeting, and now it had come to pass!

She was fairer than ever—fairer than ever! The pure classical features seemed even more perfect, the clear pale face more beautiful, the dark grey eyes more wonderful than of old. And, as she had given that little cry of joy, something had leapt into her eyes which Carruthers had never before seen there, or never before seen so clearly

and undisguisedly. The surprise of seeing him had swept away caution, and for the space of two seconds Frank was able to read the very secret of her soul.

No wonder he held her hands and gazed silently in her face. What had he to say—What could he say? The certainty that she loved him made his task no easier—the task of telling her that he knew her secret, or at least a great part of it—the task of asking her to confide in him and let him help her. So he remained silent until she gently drew her hands from his.

The light had faded from Beatrice's face. She also after a moment of forgetfulness was coming back to her own world and its troubles. Her eyes dropped and her face clouded.

"How did you find me?" she asked in troubled tones.

"By a strange chance. I will tell you how some day."



"Tell me now."

Frank shook his head. "Not now," he said. "Let it suffice that I have found you."

"But," said Beatrice with agitation, "do others know—can others find me? If you learned it why not another?"

He saw the display of fear, and hastened to reassure her. "No one save myself can learn it in the same way. Your retreat is safe."

She sighed her relief. There was an awkward pause. Frank was the first to break it.

"Beatrice," he said, "I have come a long way to see you. I have much to say—you may have much to say to me. Can we go to some place where we can talk?"

"Yes, we can go to my home." Beatrice called her boy, and Frank, glad of anything to break the awkwardness of the moment, greeted the little fellow and made

friends with him to such purpose that he insisted upon Mr. Carruthers holding his chubby hand and walking with him.

“What a pity to cut that bright hair!” said Frank to Beatrice.

“It was more than pity—it was cruel, but it was cruel necessity,” she said sadly.

Beatrice led the way to the house in which she lived. She walked with her head bent, and as one in deep thought. She could not make up her mind whether to be glad or sorry at Frank’s coming. She saw, however, that it put an end to her present mode of life. That it meant confession, revealing of everything. That it meant return to England and to such friends as would still be her friends. That if it meant shame and sorrow, it also meant safety and immunity from persecution. She began to regret that she had yielded to Sarah’s wish to go to England and see Hervey. But that was not of much consequence. She

felt sure that as soon as Carruthers learned her history her affairs would pass into hands more competent to deal with them than the hands of two weak women. So on the whole her feelings were those of relief.

And yet for some, for one reason, Frank was the last person she would have chosen to whom to reveal her secrets. She shrank from having to show the man she loved that her life for years had been one of deceit. Now that the deceit had to be confessed to him, it seemed to lose all the innocent nature which she had hitherto flattered herself it possessed. In short, if such a thing can be imagined, Beatrice felt, as Carruthers once felt her to be, as an idol would feel when just upon the point of being hurled down from its pedestal.

Carruthers, who had his own thoughts to trouble him, and to whom it seemed that any conventional remarks would at the

present juncture be mockery, respected her meditations, so that, save for the lisping prattle of the boy, silence reigned until Beatrice found herself in her room with Frank sitting near her. It struck her as so strange that he of all others should be here, that even now she wondered if she was dreaming. She shunned his eyes, fearing to read reproach in them.

"How are they all at home?" she asked. "How are my uncles, and dear old Hazlewood?" Her eyes filled with tears. Her emotion did not escape Carruthers.

"They are all well," he said. "I heard from Herbert a few days ago. He sent me your letter."

"Will they ever forgive me?" said Beatrice. "Will they ever speak to me again?"

"I hope so," said Frank gravely. "They were, of course, much vexed and upset."

Beatrice glanced at him nervously. Even

he had but held out a hope of forgiveness—and he loved her. She wished he had not come to Munich.

“Do they know my reason for leaving England?” she asked timidly.

“No. They have hazarded many guesses, but not one has been near the truth.”

She started at his answer. The truth? Did he know the truth? If so, how had he learned it?

“Do you know why I left?” she asked.

A look of pain settled on Carruthers face. “Yes,” he said, softly. “Chance has given me your story. But to me—only to me.”

“Do you know all—all that I have done, all that I have suffered?”

He rose. There was strange agitation in his manner and voice. “All!” he exclaimed. “Beatrice! Beatrice! how can I find words to tell you what I know?”

Beatrice, did I not just now hear that child call you mother?"

"Yes, he is my son," she said, calmly.

"All!" continued Carruthers, excitedly.

"Need I know all? Need I be racked by hearing the one I love tell me all? Need I pain her by forcing her to hear me? Have I not heard enough? Why should I seek to know more?"

"Let me tell you my story, Frank," she said, beseechingly.

"No!" He spoke in that imperious tone which she had once before, in a slighter degree, noticed. "No! Listen to me. Beatrice, believe me, I have longed to find you. I have sighed for this moment. If I have surprised your secrets it was not for my own ends. Beatrice, when chance showed me where you were, I came to you with but one object. This morning—even when, at last, I saw you, I had but one thought. It was to come to you, to say I

have sought you because you are in distress, because you want help. Such help as I can give is yours. Without question, without the hope of reward, it is yours."

Again she strove to interrupt him. He checked her.

"Listen! I have more, much more, to say. I have seen you again," his voice changed to one of supreme tenderness, "I have held your hands. I have looked into your face—the same sweet face of my dreams. Beatrice, all is changed with me," he knelt beside her and took her hands. "If once I wished to know all, now I say tell me nothing. What is the past to me? Hide it away, forget it, scorn it. Our life begins to-day. I love you. Bend down and tell me you will be my wife."

She forcibly drew her hands from his, covered her eyes, and sobbed.

"You love me," he went on, passionately. "Is it for my sake you will not do this

thing? Look at me—read in my eyes what my heart desires—know that you have the power of making or marring a man's life. Beatrice! My love, my only love, answer me!"

Once more he tried to take her hands. She tore them away with a cry of anguish, and her tearful eyes rested on his troubled, upturned face.

"Frank," she said, "you are killing me. Spare me and let me speak!"

He waited in anxious silence until her sobs died away and sustained speech was a possibility.

"Frank, Frank!" she said. "You have been misled. You have heard but half the truth. You love me, yet dare to think that if what you have heard is true I would be your wife. I cannot blame you for believing. I have no right to blame. My actions have helped that belief. Yet in believing it, you, Frank,



have given me the sharpest pain of all that I have known."

Carruthers bent his head and prayed she would forgive him.

"I have nothing to forgive. From whom did you think I fled—from what danger? Frank, I fled from the man who is my husband—the man who more than five years ago took advantage of a girl's folly, married her and made her life a misery."

Carruthers rose from his knees. His face was white as a sheet. He was the picture of despair. A legion of Mrs. Millers would not now have caused hope to throw up the tiniest shoot. Her husband! The room seemed to swim around him.

When he recovered himself he saw Beatrice with the tears falling down her cheeks. The sight was a bitter reproach to him. How had he kept his vow? Instead of giving her comfort and aid he was but adding to her trouble. Moreover, a keen sense

of shame came home to him. Instead of joy he had felt fresh misery when Beatrice's words told him that her secret was not one of such nature as he had been led to believe. That his first thought upon hearing the truth should have been one of sorrow showed him that he had reached a depth of selfishness and degradation which no love could excuse or condone. He blushed for himself, and for the sake of his manhood strove until he regained composure. There was a strange calm on his face when, once more, he drew near Beatrice.

"Tell me all," he said in a quiet voice. "No, don't fear for me." She glanced at him inquiringly. "Tell me all, I can bear it. I can help you."

She told him all. Told him without self-excuse, without even exaggerating her husband's sins against the world and against her. She told him without claiming mercy on account of what she had suffered; but

there was a pathos in her voice, an utter hopelessness in her manner, which told her listener more than words could have told. His heart ached as he thought of her; his blood boiled as he thought of the villain who had wrought this misery.

He heard her to the very end in silence. Throughout her tale she had not spoken of her husband by any name; but from the first Carruthers guessed who he was. As she finished speaking he turned his pale face to her. "The man's name is Hervey," he said.

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"I have seen him twice." As he spoke Carruthers involuntarily clenched his hands. There was a kind of savage satisfaction in thinking under what conditions he last saw the rogue. He wished he had struck even harder. He frowned and his mouth grew hard and stern. Beatrice saw the facial change.

“Do you blame me too much to forgive me, Frank?” she asked anxiously. He looked at her with eyes as soft and tender as a woman’s.

“Blame you? Who am I to blame you? What have I to forgive? You have all my pity—all my sympathy. Again I offer you such help as I can give—such help as a brother can give a sister. You will take this from me, Beatrice?”

She placed her hand in his. “Yes, I will take it. It is more than I deserve. Ah, me! why should my trouble enter into your life?”

His fingers tightened on hers. His eyes sought hers. “Beatrice,” he said, “I did not live until I knew you. You have a right to claim all I can give. Yet there is something I must ask—something I must know. You have told me much—will you tell me all?”

“I have told you all.”

"No, not all. Beatrice, life promises to be but a sorry affair for me. Let me have such cold consolation as it can give. Beatrice, let me hear you say with your own lips that had things been otherwise you could have loved me—would have been my wife."

She met his eyes bravely. "Yes, Frank," she said softly. "I will say that. I will say more. I love you now. Ah, Frank, reproach me, blame me, when I tell you that although I knew it meant unhappiness for you it was a sweet moment to me when first I knew that you loved me."

After this avowal there was silence for a minute. Then Carruthers leaned forward. "Beatrice, my love," he said hoarsely, "kiss me once. I only ask it once."

She flushed to the roots of her hair, yet she made no resistance. Carruthers drew her to him and for the first, and, for all he knew, the last time their lips met. He took,

she gave, the one kiss. When it was over Carruthers released her from his embrace, and the two drew apart.

Here, no doubt, Mr. Carruthers will sink immensely in public esteem. He acted as a hero is never supposed to act, or at least in fiction. He lost an opportunity. Every one who has studied the nature of true love as depicted by the modern passionate writers and skilled analysts of the human heart, must feel that Mr. Carruthers should have then and there clasped Beatrice to his heart and have sworn that love overruled everything. He should have followed that one modest kiss by thousands. He should have said, "What is the marriage tie when two souls are in such ecstatic communion as yours and mine?" He should have said, "There are other lands. Lands where no one knows us, where life may be a perpetual dream of love. Let us fly there and be blessed." In the mad whirl of his passion

such scruples as she, for appearance' sake, urged should have been swept away, and, married or unmarried, he should have borne her off, his for ever and ever ! Yes, he lost such an opportunity that his conduct must be apologised for !

He did none of these wild, passionate things simply because he was an English gentleman, who wished the woman he loved to be his wife and the lawful mother of his children. True, that his love had carried him away sufficiently to make him willing to blot out an imaginary past. It was great enough to raise and restore the woman he loved, but it was not great enough, or, shall we say, too great, to dream of degrading her !

## CHAPTER VII.

## A WOMAN WITH A MISSION.

INSPIRATION, as a rule, soars above the pettiness of detail, and of all inspiration that one whose wings are worked by religion flies the highest and freest from trammels of custom and caution. A man or a woman inspired with an ethical mission to humanity feels fully convinced that, provided the eyes are kept steadfastly on the glorious result, the brambles which have for ages choked the path leading to the great goal will in some mysterious manner get cleared out of the way: without faith of this kind inspiration sinks to the dull level of wisdom.



Sarah Miller was a woman with a mission; a mission, however, of a personal not of a general nature. Her mission as she read it was to insure the worldly happiness of her beloved mistress, and her faith in the inspiration which prompted the task was such as to make her believe that she would succeed.

Everything in this woman's life turned on her devotion to Beatrice. Her mind was like a dark, sunless ruin, in the centre of which springs one pure white marble column, and that column her love for her mistress. The wild words she once used when telling Frank Carruthers what she could do for Beatrice's sake, if anything, fell short of the truth.

It is absurd to suppose that any one of us is entitled to such adoration from a fellow-creature. Very probably David himself did not deserve Jonathan's unparalleled devotion any more than Beatrice deserved

that of Mrs. Miller. Nevertheless, if human affection were doled out into the scale against personal merit most of us would fare extremely ill in this world. Simple justice, like pure republicanism, and many other indisputably correct things, works better in theory than in practice. Mrs. Miller's strange worship of Beatrice must be sought for in causes other than the girl's merits or even her servant's gratitude.

It was the outpour of an impetuous, passionate nature, dammed and diverted from its proper course by the stony barrier raised by the creed of predestination. It was something which, if dreary Calvinism had not beaten it back to earth, would have soared heavenwards, and have there found a legitimate field for expansion and exercise. Had Sarah Miller's religious education, or the bent of her peculiarly constructed mind been such as to lead her to follow a more

cheerful profession of faith, she would have been an ardent and, perhaps, happy Christian devotee, walking this earth with her eyes turned heavenwards, as do those who look upon this life as nothing more than a comma in the endless volume of eternity. Alas! such a beatific state was far beyond her reach.

The belief that ages and ages before she was born, her place, not only in this world, but also in the next, had been irrevocably fixed, the terrible conviction that she was one of the many doomed by God's will to eternal torture, a fate which not the prayers of a lifetime, or the conduct of a saint, could avert or in the slightest degree mitigate; this fearful belief closed round her like the walls of a prison from which there is no escape, from which death itself is no release. How in such a state of mind could she turn with feelings of love and adoration to the Supreme Being Who had doomed her

to such unutterable woe? No, she could fear Him, tremble before Him, abase herself at His feet, pray her wild hopeless prayers, but such love as she had to give was fain to bestow itself upon an earthly object, and for want of a better that object was Beatrice.

With such a doctrine, doubly dreadful when joined to the assurance of its personal application, it is no wonder that Sarah Miller's mind was not quite so well balanced as that of an ordinary happy-go-lucky believer in the efficacy of a simple death-bed repentance. The wonder is that there should be men and women in this world who hold views all but identical with Mrs. Miller's and still remain sane. But the more one studies the religious side of mankind the more mystified one gets.

This then was the emissary who went forth on behalf of Beatrice, this, the bearer of the flag of truce between her and Maurice

Hervey. A strange intermediary, yet possessing some valuable qualifications for the office, insomuch as she was devoted to her own side, hated the foe, and, above all, was full of the belief that in some unknown way she would be guided so as to enable her to bring the negotiation to a satisfactory issue.

She listened with apparent attention to Beatrice's many and clear instructions ; but her thoughts were in reality far away. In this matter she believed she was called upon to act more the part of a principal than that of an agent. Beatrice, who was anxious to know how Hervey was to be found, had to rest satisfied with the assurance that Mrs. Miller would experience no difficulty in tracing him. Provided that Hervey was still in London her assurance was justified, for as his time on ticket-of-leave had not yet expired, his address could no doubt be obtained upon application in the proper quarter.

This was about the only detail Sarah had as yet stooped to consider. She had not yet thought how her end was to be gained, whether by threats or by entreaties. She felt that all she had to do was to meet the man face to face, and then she would find herself guided to act for the best.

Beatrice, who had some misgivings on the score of allowing her faithful servant to make so long a journey unprotected, had carefully looked up routes and trains. She fancied that Sarah would travel in greater ease and safety if she went to England *via* Paris, by the great through express train which runs across Europe from Constantinople to Paris, stopping only two or three times in each country which it traverses. So Mrs. Miller travelled in such luxury as a railway train can offer.

She reached London without any mishap. Here she went to a friend's, the one to whose care Beatrice's correspondence had

been entrusted. After a night's rest had dispelled the fatigue of the journey, she began the first part of her mission—that of finding Maurice Hervey.

The task was a simple one. She inquired until she ascertained where the register of ticket-of-leave men resident in London was kept; then, upon applying at the proper office, and satisfying the authorities that she sought the man for no evil purpose, the address was given her. She took a cab and drove straight to it.

Hervey, who had by effluxion of means been thrown from the lap of luxury on to the hard floor of bare existence, was housed in what was little more than a garret. Indeed the money which Mr. Field paid him on behalf of Frank Carruthers was the one plank between him and starvation. He had parted with his rings and other valuables. All that he could call his own was a decent suit of clothes. This he had

clung to tenaciously, knowing that if it comes to begging, a fairly-dressed man has a better chance of awakening sympathy than one who is in rags and tatters. The contrast between decent broadcloth and empty pockets is so painful that when asked, one feels compelled to do something to tone it down.

He was sitting in his cheerless, sordid room, smoking his short pipe and working out schemes of vengeance and plunder much as he had worked them out in his secluded state in Portland prison. He was cursing his own clumsiness and want of foresight, as indeed he cursed them at least a hundred times a day. He was unwashed and unshorn, and his right arm, although nearly mended, was still in one of those shiny black slings. Altogether the man was in a condition of body and mind far from enviable.

For hours he had been sitting and thinking



of the glorious life he would lead as soon as he could ascertain the whereabouts of his wife. Then he would be able to soar out of this slough of poverty, and eat, drink, and be merry. No wonder that when, after the ceremony of a slight knock, Sarah Miller opened the door and stood before him, a cry of absolute joy sprang from his lips. Next to Beatrice she was the one he most wished to see. Now that she was here, Beatrice must also be accessible. His cheek flushed, his eyes brightened. If the privations which he had been enduring had at any time urged him to promise to himself that if good fortune brought him again in communication with his wife his hand should rest lighter upon her, the thought vanished as his visitor crossed the threshold. His time of triumph was at hand, and his one idea was to wring all that could be wrung from her whose youthful folly had linked her life to his. He felt

contempt for her weakness in having given him, by sending her servant to seek him, the chance he so sorely needed.

Sarah, with her white, thin face, as usual thrown into strong relief by her sombre garb, stepped towards Hervey and stood looking at him with that peculiar rapt expression which at times came over her features. As soon as he had recovered from his surprise at this unhopèd-for visit, Hervey eyed the woman curiously, but for a while there was silence between them. Still she continued to gaze and gaze at the man, not in anger, not in fear, but as one actuated by motives of curiosity. It was a kind of gaze which no one could be expected to endure for long without showing symptoms of impatience.

“What the devil are you looking at me like that for?” asked Hervey. His rough voice brought Sarah back to herself. She drew her hand across her brow.

"It is there, it is written there," she muttered.

"What is written there, you old fool?" asked Hervey.

She made no reply, but her thin lips moved, and again her eyes glanced at him with a strange, wild look.

"Sit down," said Hervey sharply; "and try and talk like a sensible woman, and keep your wits from wandering."

He pushed a chair towards her. She sat down, and seemed waiting for him to speak again.

"Well, what do you want?" he said. "I suppose she sent you?"

"Yes, my mistress sent me."

"What for? Has she sent me any money, or is she trying to starve me? Let her take care. I shall find her again some day."

"Yes," said Sarah, in curious mechanical accents. "Yes, she has sent you money."

"How much is it? Hand it over."

She drew a small bag from her pocket. Hervey clutched it eagerly. "There is fifty pounds," she said in the same mechanical way as before.

"Fifty pounds!" exclaimed the man fiercely. "What does she mean by sending me a paltry sum like that? Fifty pounds whilst my wife has thousands a year!"

"Take it or leave it, as you choose," said Sarah.

"I'll take it, never fear. Oh yes, I'll take it. Perhaps it's meant as a peace-offering. Now let me hear what else you have to say. You didn't come here just to give me this wretched sum."

Mrs. Miller rose from her seat and looked down into the man's upturned face. Her voice when she spoke underwent a marvellous change. It absolutely rang with passion.

"No, Maurice Hervey," she cried. "I

come to offer you the one chance, to show you the one way which is still open. It may be too late to tread it, but I say to you, show mercy and perhaps mercy may be shown to you. Be warned, I say, and leave that poor girl in peace. Live your life and let her live hers. She is one of God's chosen, Maurice Hervey. Beware how you war against Him. His anger is like a two-edged sword ——"

"Keep your flights to yourself, and tell me in plain English what you mean."

"Take the money she offers you. Go and trouble her no more."

Hervey laughed his mocking laugh. "My dear Sarah," he said, "your zeal makes you anticipate matters. I must remind you that as yet I have been offered no money."

"But Miss Beatrice will pay you money," said the woman, eagerly. "Oh, take it, take it! Go away and never seek her again."

"Ah! now you're coming to business. What money will she pay?"

"She will give you five hundred a year."

A scowl passed over Hervey's face, but he restrained the oath which rose to his lips. "You are sure that's the best offer, Sarah?"

"She will give no more."

"And if I refuse it, what then?"

Sarah cast a quick glance around, and showed that she fully comprehended the squalor of Hervey's present abode. "If you refuse it," she said, "I shall go back to her, and tell her you cannot be found. Then you will be left to starve. Starvation is hard work, Maurice Hervey."

"You hag," cried Hervey; "you would lie to her."

"I would do more than lie for her sake," said Mrs. Miller. "Will you take the money?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Needs

must when the devil drives," he said airily. "Yes, Sarah, I can't help myself, I must close with the generous offer. Now tell me where to find my devoted wife, so that I may convey the news of my submission."

"You will take it?" said Sarah breathlessly.

"Have I not said I must?"

"Thank God!" As she spoke she clasped her hands and murmured words of thanks. Hervey watched her with a curious look on his face. She saw it and it startled her. "You will sign papers?" she said.

"Oh, yes; I'll sign anything. Now tell me where to find her."

"No, no. You cannot see her. She will get everything done. The lawyer will get the papers ready, and when you have signed them the money will be paid."

"Very well," said Hervey carelessly. "There's nothing more to say then."

The readiness with which he acceded to her

stipulations roused Mrs. Miller's distrust. "Do you mean to play me false?" she asked. "Will you swear on the Bible to keep your promise?"

"Certainly I will, but I am afraid there's no Bible in this house to swear on. A sad state of things which shall be rectified before you come again."

Mrs. Miller made no reply to his jeering words. She opened a small bag which she carried and drew out a well-thumbed, worn Bible. Hervey smiled his contempt.

"Place your finger between the leaves," she said solemnly, "then kiss the sacred book and swear, so help you God, you will keep your promise."

"It must be a left-handed oath," he said as he obeyed her. She clasped her hand over his, and when with a sneer on his lips he had taken the prescribed oath, she opened the book and marked the verse on which his finger had at random been placed.



“Read,” she said, “and be warned.” Hervey read—

“God shall likewise destroy thee for ever.”

Without another word she closed the book and left the room. As the door closed Hervey laughed a scornful laugh. He waited until she must have reached the street, then ran swiftly down the stairs. The lower part of the house was used as a kind of marine-store, and in the shop were two lads of about seventeen. He called one of them.

“A lady dressed in black just went out. Follow her and find out where she goes and I’ll give you a sovereign.”

The boy, who knew something about the state of the lodger’s finances, looked amused, but did not budge. “Make haste, you fool,” cried Hervey. “Here’s the money waiting—see it!”

The sight of a real tangible sovereign

sent the lad off in double quick time, and utterly unsuspecting evil Beatrice's ambassador was cleverly tracked to her temporary abode.

Meanwhile Hervey returned to his garret in a joyful frame of mind. However matters might turn out, a comfortable change in his circumstances had taken place. The worst that could happen would insure him a comfortable income, but, so far as he could arrange it, he meant to avoid the worst. He meant to find Beatrice, and by the power he held over her, force her to surrender to him all save a bare pittance. Let her only be once more within his grasp, and he would take care that she escaped no more. He ground his teeth as he thought what he had already paid for an act of carelessness. The chance of repairing it was at last within reach. He positively gloated as he pictured the horror with which his wife would greet him when he again invaded her

retreat. He laughed in glee at the paternal right which furnished a weapon so sharp to smite, so irresistible, to compel her to yield to his demands. Yes, money and revenge were once more within his reach.

His spy returned in due course. He had earned his sovereign, for he was able to give Hervey the name of the street and the number of the house to which Sarah Miller had gone. Hervey laughed again. He dressed himself, visited the barber's, and then went to keep watch on Sarah's abode.

He watched until nightfall. Early dawn found him once more at his post. Noon and evening he was still there, and evening brought him the reward of his patience. A cab drove up to the door, a box was placed upon it, and a dark-robed figure entered it. The door was shut, and away rolled the cab.

It was scarcely out of sight when Hervey rang the bell of the house and asked if Mrs. Miller was in. No, she had just left. Ah,

that was unlucky; he wanted to see her on important business. Where could he find her?

"You'll have a long way to go unless you can overtake her," said the woman of the house, laughing. "She's just off to foreign parts."

"Going abroad! Where is she going?"

"All the way to Munich, wherever that may be."

His heart leapt. At any rate now he knew where to find his quarry. "Munich!" he exclaimed. "I must try and overtake her before she goes. What station is it?"

"Charing Cross. I heard her tell the man."

He bid his informant adieu with scant ceremony. He hailed the first cab he saw, and was soon rattling in pursuit of Sarah. Although he did not know at what time the train started, he was quite at ease as to catching it. He knew the grace which a

woman always allows herself in the matter of trains. He had judged rightly, for the first thing he saw upon entering the station was Mrs. Miller at the office engaged in registering her box. He ventured to creep close to her, and heard her with the incredulity which a woman invariably displays when she surrenders personal custody of her luggage, twice inform the clerk that she was going to Munich by way of Paris. After hearing this Hervey slipped away, took his ticket, and having watched Sarah enter the train took his seat in another compartment. So that Beatrice's emissary as she started on her return journey, joyful at the apparent success of her mission, little thought that she was in something of the same position as the man who, according to the old German legend, carried unwittingly the demon of plague into the village which held all who were dear to him.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## PURSUED.

FOR hours and hours Mrs. Miller remained blissfully ignorant of the fact that the wheels which were bearing her to her destination bore also sorrow and ruin in the person of Maurice Hervey. The fellow-travellers did not confront each other until the next morning, and when the through train was well out of Paris. Sarah, indeed, had been all but invisible since she boarded the Dover and Calais boat. The crossing had been a rough one, and sea-sickness claims precedence with the mind the most preoccupied. Sarah had suffered much, and as soon as she found herself in the

smooth-going train had sought forgetfulness of her woes in sleep. Hervey, who had no wish to precipitate matters by an untimely revelation of his presence, had also effaced himself from general observation.

But some time after the train had left the Paris and Lyons station Sarah opened the door of her comfortable compartment and in the narrow gangway of the train came full upon Maurice Hervey. He was smoking and watching the flying landscape through the glass windows at the side of the narrow passage. He turned, looked at Sarah, and laughed in cruel merriment as he saw her gaze of horrified surprise.

"You!" she gasped. "You have followed me!"

"Every step since you left my humble abode, my dear Sarah."

She turned away and re-entered the compartment she had left. Hervey followed her, and with a laugh threw himself down

on the seat nearest to the door. The train was not full, and the compartments were small ones, so it happened that the two people were alone.

It was typical of the man's cruel nature that he looked forward with feelings of keen enjoyment to the torture which he meant to inflict upon the woman during those hours of travel, by forcing upon her the presence which he knew so unwelcome.

"Oh, yes, Sarah," he said jeeringly; "I followed you, and I shall never leave your side until you lead me to my beloved wife. It's no good thinking you can give me the slip. To save trouble I may tell you I know you are going to Munich. What a clever woman you are, Sarah. I am so much obliged to you."

She wrung her hands convulsively, then covered her face and moaned. She had acted, as she thought, for the best, but this man's craft had overcome her. Her mistress



was to be made to suffer, and through her. Through the one who would willingly sacrifice body and soul to save her from pain !

“Don’t be sulky, Sarah,” said Hervey. “The game’s up now, you may as well give in. Here, make yourself useful and fill my pipe. I can’t use this confounded right arm of mine.”

She took no notice of his request, but presently she raised her head and looked at him.

“Be warned,” she said in low tones. “Once more, I say, be warned in time. Leave this train at the next station. Fly while you can.”

He laughed scornfully. “Now, is it likely ?” he said.

She made no further appeal. She sank back into stony silence, and from that time no remark, no question, no taunt of the man’s could draw a word from her thin lips. Hour after hour went by and Sarah Miller

sat in her corner motionless and silent as a statue.

But her thoughts! Her thoughts were busy enough. They thronged and invaded her brain. They changed and shifted from incoherence to systematic arrangement and back again to incoherence. Through all the jumble the one fearful truth shone out distinctly. She was taking this man to her mistress.

No food had passed her lips since she left London. All desire to eat had left her when she first caught sight of Hervey's hateful form. Her hands were hot; her veins seemed full of fever, and now and again a mist seemed to close round her, from which she emerged only to see once more the cruel face of her tormentor. So the hours went by.

Hervey had food sent into the carriage. He also consoled himself at short intervals with brandy and water. He bought cigars,

smoked them, and grumbled at their badness. Sometimes he rose, walked out into the gangway and stretched his legs, but he kept a keen watch on the woman. Not a second time would he fail from lack of vigilance. For amusement he now and again taunted his companion, and his jeers apparently unnoticed drove her to the verge of desperation. Her hands grew hotter, her pulses beat with fiercer rapidity.

The sun sank; the twilight died away; the lamps were lit. Every hour, every moment brought grief nearer and nearer to Beatrice. Long before another sun rose the train would be at Munich. The thought maddened the white-faced woman.

Shortly after leaving Stuttgart the steward looked in and in broken English suggested that the beds should be prepared. Mrs. Miller shook her head, and signified that she had no wish to retire to rest. Hervey ordered more brandy and also declined the

proffered couch. The steward wished that he could have the refusal of one of those unmade couches and the time to occupy it, shrugged his shoulders, and withdrew. The travellers were once more alone. In less than five hours the journey would be at an end.

Suddenly a wave of inspiration flooded the poor woman's harassed brain. An inspiration which made all things clear as day. A strange brilliancy shone in her eyes. In a flash she saw, or believed she saw, to what end these things were leading. God's hand was at work.

Had she not dreamed a dream in which Maurice Hervey figured! Had she not persuaded herself when she first saw him that she had seen written in his face that his days were numbered? Was she not sure—sure as she was of her own eternal condemnation—that God meant Beatrice to taste happiness as well in this world as in

the next? The hour of deliverance was at hand. The inspiration which had told her that her errand would be crowned with success was not that of a lying spirit. God was at work. Hervey had been led to take this journey; to break the promise he had made; and thereby accept the fate foreshadowed by the fearful words to which his finger had fortuitously pointed. This journey, begun in craft and in defiance of God's warning conveyed through herself, would never be ended. She, by the light of her wild faith, read the Divine purpose plainly as if it was written in letters of fire.

If the line of demarcation between fanaticism and madness in the poor woman's brain was not by now entirely obliterated, it had grown faint, blurred, and indistinct. She was hovering on the verge of insanity, and the method which sometimes lies in madness was at work and supplying the loss of the reasoning faculties. Now that the

truth had come to her, now that she knew by inspiration why this man had been permitted to trace and follow her and for a while enjoy his triumph, she found herself speculating and wondering how and by what means the interposition of the Divine hand would be shown. She waited for the moment when, from some apparently earthly cause, the cup of triumph would be dashed from his lips. She waited and waited, and although the hours passed without a sign, never wavered in her belief that even at the last moment deliverance would be brought about.

Once or twice she turned and looked at her companion, and by the same strange fancy which had before seized her, persuaded herself that the something which she imagined she saw in his face, and which betokened approaching death, grew more and more distinct. She felt no pity for the man; nor would she have dared to attempt

a second warning ; but she gazed on him with a kind of awe, raised by the thought that in a brief space of time this wretched creature would be lying in the place appointed for him, lying there, and to lie there, for ever, and ever, and ever !

Her madness, if it may be called madness, deepened as the time passed by. After all, in spite of its claims to superiority, the mind is but the slave of the body. The yoke may be thrown aside for a while, but sooner or later its pressure becomes apparent. Fatigue and want of food were with Sarah Miller completing what distress had begun. Yet to herself it seemed that she had never seen things clearer, never reasoned more cogently than at this moment when her brain was taxed beyond endurance.

How would God act ? Would He strike this man dead as he sat there ? Would something frightful happen ? Would the train be overturned ? As this question

exercised her every jolt as the wheels passed the points sent a thrill through her and made her fancy the moment was at hand.

No. This could not be the appointed method. Merciless as her creed taught her to believe the One to Whom she prayed, her sense of justice forbade her to suppose that many other lives must be sacrificed for the sake of destroying Maurice Hervey. She must wait patiently and in faith, not anticipate God's purpose. But the time was growing very short!

Suddenly she turned and knelt on the floor of the carriage. She offered up a prayer that things might be made clear to her; that her agony of suspense might be brought to an end. Hervey watched her and laughed aloud.

"Quite right, Sarah," he said. "Never neglect your religious observances. I am afraid you can't pray yourself out of this situation; but there's no harm in trying."



The sound of his voice gave another and a fresh turn to her thoughts. At that moment her prayer was answered and everything grew clear. The clouds which troubled her rolled away, or, it may be, closed round her to break no more.

She shivered, and still kneeling turned her face to the speaker. Her look for a moment startled him in spite of the contempt he felt for her religious vagaries. And well it might startle him.

Now she knew all. She knew why she had lived. She knew to what she was predestined. Cycles ago this moment had been decreed. It was she whom God had appointed to remove this man from the path which led one of elect to happiness. Even as Jael, even as Judith, had their mission so had she, Sarah Miller, a mission equally terrible, that of slaying a man whom God had doomed. With her brain flooded, permeated by this one fearful thought, the

woman rose from her knees and resumed her seat.

Everything, she fancied, with her mind bewildered in reality, yet to herself seemingly clear, pointed to the carrying out of this decree of destiny. The solitude, the night journey, even the man's half-helpless condition were but details of a settled scheme. The opportunity was here, only the way and the means were wanting. These in good time would be vouchsafed to her. She would be shown how she, a weak woman, was to take the life of a strong man.

Little did Maurice Hervey, as from the effects of fatigue, cigars, and brandy he sat half-dozing in the corner of the compartment, dream what thoughts were passing through the mind of the woman near him. To him she was nothing more than an addle-headed sort of creature, who once upon a time had done a great deal towards bringing

him to ruin ; an act which he rightly believed he was now paying her in full.

How was she to do it ? Time was passing, and yet the path was not yet pointed out. See, the man's eyes were closed ! Had the moment come ? If she had a knife she might even now drive it into his heart ! But she had no knife ; had nothing which would serve her need, or rather God's need. Suddenly she remembered, as one remembers a dream, that hours and hours ago she had seen a fellow-passenger opening a bag, and had noticed on the top of that bag a pistol. Had she been allowed to catch sight of the weapon for the purpose which she was deputed to carry out ? If so, where was that pistol, and how could she get it into her hands ? She rose, and without any settled object, passed Hervey and stepped out into the gangway.

Her movement awoke him. He put his head through the door and watched her as

a cat watches a mouse. Sarah went the length of the long carriage, but found nothing to guide her to her end. Every door was hermetically sealed. It seemed as if she and her companion were the only persons awake. The only sound heard was the ceaseless rush of the train as it tore its way on and on through the night.

The woman returned and resumed her seat. The means had not yet been given her. A phantom of common-sense also flitted through her mind. If she killed this man in such a manner, it meant arrest and trial of herself. It meant shame and exposure to her loved mistress. No, she must wait yet a while. God had not yet spoken the last word; not yet shown the exact way in which His work was to be done. Yet her belief never swerved, never wavered.

Or not until she knew that the end of the long dreary journey was close at hand ;

not until a kind of instinct told her that in a few short minutes Munich would be reached. Hervey, whom necessities had deprived of the means of telling the time, was still sleeping his wakeful and suspicious dog's-sleep. Suddenly the long shrill whistle sounded. The man started up wide awake, and for the first time for hours a doubt as to her true reading of God's purpose flashed through Sarah Miller's brain. The time was so short. There was so much—so much to be done. The way was still in darkness. Would the last few moments light it up?

She clenched her hands convulsively, digging the nails of one into the flesh of the other. She glanced once more at Hervey's face, which from his fatigue looked pale and wan. She rose, and mechanically, like one in a dream, stepped out of the compartment into the dimly-lighted gangway. Hervey followed her.

Without knowing why or wherefore, she walked the whole length of the carriage. In a dazed way she opened the door at the end and stepped out into the open air. Hervey followed her, and the door closed behind them, and the man and the woman stood alone on the iron platform which lies between one carriage and its forerunner.

The train had not yet slackened speed. Its wild rush still whipped the naturally calm air into a fierce gale. The woman's dark hair, which had come untwisted, streamed behind her in elf locks. A tall black figure, with a white, a death-white face and burning eyes, staring fixedly at the destination to which the train was hurrying her, as fixedly as her mind was turned to the work which she yet believed she was doomed to execute.

The night was cloudy and moonless. Some way ahead, a little to the right, the lights of the great city lit up the dark sky.

It was on these lights that Sarah Miller's eyes were fixed ; her lips the while muttering inaudible words.

For a few moments Hervey stood in silence by her side. Then he spoke. "It's no good, Sarah, you can't give me the slip. I'll follow you everywhere. Be a sensible woman for once, and don't give me more bother."

She spoke, but not in answer to his words. "That glare ! that red glare !" she cried in a thrilling voice. "Look at it ! Look at it well ! Do you know what it means to you and to me ?"

Before he could reply she answered her own question. "It is the red glare of hell," she cried in still wilder accents. "The glare of the fire which burns for you and for me. The shriek ! Hear the shriek of the damned !"

Once more the whistle sent its piercing scream of warning far on the night air ; and in another moment the strong brakes would

have fallen on the great wheels. Hervey, really startled by his companion's wild bearing, turned to her savagely.

"Here, no nonsense!" he said roughly.

These were the last words he spoke. Suddenly, and without the slightest warning, the woman threw herself upon him. Her arms clasped him with the strength of frenzy. Her weight threw him off his balance. He staggered backwards. He made one wild grab with his uninjured arm at the iron rail, missed it, and most likely could not have held it had he caught it, then slipped down the three or four iron steps, and, with the woman's arms still holding him, the two fell with a fearful thud on to the six-foot way. His cry, if he had time to raise one, was lost in the rush of the train and the shriek of the steam-whistle. All was over in a second—the train was speeding on, leaving behind it a dark mass lying between the up and the



down lines. At the very last moment the way had been made clear to Sarah Miller. Even as she fell with her victim her one thought was of frenzied joy that she had found the means to do God's work.

For a minute or two after the last carriage of the train had swept by, that black mass lay motionless in the six-foot way. Then part of it began to show signs of life. Slowly and painfully the woman detached herself from her victim. She rose to her knees, and remained there staring fixedly at the white face that looked up to her own. Her frenzy for the moment had passed, and she scarcely knew what had happened or what she had done.

She was unhurt. The man had struck the ground first, and so borne the brunt of the shock. His head had fallen heavily on the ballast of the line, and he lay without sense or motion. Was he dead?

This, when her disjointed and scattered

thoughts were once more able to resume the terrible kaleidoscopic pattern into which fanaticism had shaken them, was the one question asked by the woman. She felt for the moment no remorse, no horror, but the dread seized her that her hand might have failed ; that the work might not yet be done ; that she had not fulfilled her destiny. She bent over the prostrate man and placed her cheek close to his lips.

He breathed ! She felt the faint breath on her cheek ! She laid her hand on his heart and felt its pulsations, slowly distinct. She sprang to her feet with a sharp cry of distress. She had failed ! Hervey was alive and would recover. The work had not been done !

She peered wildly into the darkness. She scarcely knew for what she looked. A large stone, a piece of iron, anything which would show her that the hand which had guided her so far on the fearful road of fate had

not deserted her: but she found nothing, absolutely nothing which could serve her need.

But suddenly, away along the down line she saw a round red light creeping apparently nearer and nearer. Her heart leapt at the sight. To the uttermost bitterest end the way was clear. The final word had gone forth, the final revelation was made to her.

She placed her hands under the man's shoulders, and by an effort of strength, desperate and far beyond what might have been expected from her frame, dragged him over the few feet of roadway which lay between him and the metals. He groaned once or twice, but remained senseless and motionless as she placed him right in the track of the coming train.

The red light was close—close at hand, but the man lay still and recked nothing of it. The woman having accomplished

her ghastly work, wound her black shawl tightly round her head, then fell upon her knees, waited, and lived an age in every moment.

She heard, through the muffling, the rush, she felt on her hands the wind of the metal monster as it swept by ; but she heard or felt no more. She rose and shuddered convulsively ; then, without a glance to see what her hand had wrought, stepped over the line, down the steep embankment, and was lost in the night. She had done what she believed to be her appointed task. No longer would Maurice Hervey stand between Beatrice and happiness !

The poor wretch was almost cut in two. The wheels which had crushed the life out of him were those of an engine on its way to pick up trucks on a siding some way down the line. The driver felt the slight obstruction, and having marked the spot where it occurred, upon his return stopped

the train, and knew what had caused that momentary jolt, knew that a man's life had, in that second, passed away.

The body was picked up, placed in a truck, taken to the Munich station, and thence to the place appointed for the reception of the bodies of unknown men who met with a sudden or a violent death.

## CHAPTER IX.

## “ I AM MAD.”

IF by any chance Beatrice, who certainly had trouble enough to make her wakeful, had risen with the dawn of the morning which followed the tragedy, and looked out of her casement, she would have seen a sight which would have caused her much surprise. She would have seen Sarah Miller, whom she believed to be in England, standing on the opposite side of the street ; utter despair and anguish written in every lineament ; gazing at her mistress's window like one bidding the object, the dearest on earth, an eternal farewell—eternal because even the consoling hope of a meeting in some future

state is absent. But Beatrice, who, in the earlier watches of the night, had been awake for hours with her sorrow, slept on until the sun was high. Perhaps it was well for her she did so.

The poor self-appointed instrument for working the Divine Will had, after she left the scene of her dark work, wandered about the outskirts of Munich, aimlessly and hopelessly. Had it been broad daylight, and had there been persons to see her, an occasional stifled moan and a wringing of the hands would have been all that showed the agony of mind she endured. But it was not, as might be supposed, the agony of remorse. It was agony at the thought of the further sacrifice which such sense as still was hers told her she must make, in order that the desired and predestined results might follow the act of the night.

She was mad and she was not mad. On what may be called the religious side of

the question, her mind, as may be guessed from her deeds, was gone past redemption. It may be that this had been her true state for years; ever since she had accepted as true the inexorable logic of creed which she had partly been taught, partly framed for herself. The fire may have been burning for years, giving now and again transient flashes, and only waiting for certain circumstances to fan it to a consuming flame. The fierce burst was now over, but the fire would burn and not again be hidden until it had devoured life as well as reason.

She had killed, murdered this man in all but cold blood. Apart from the horror attendant on the actual execution of the crime, a horror which began to haunt her and be ever with her, she felt no poignant misery, no maddening regret. In her wild disjointed way she lamented, not the man's death, but the fact that she had been chosen to bring it about. She lamented it even as



Judas might have lamented the hard fate which, in order that prophecy should be fulfilled, singled him out, and decreed that he should betray his Master. And if it be true that a providence saves and slays, who shall say that the woman's mad reasoning was unsound? Are not faith and logic mortal foes, who shall only be reconciled when the lion lies down with the lamb?

On the other side, the material side, Sarah Miller was, as yet, sane, or nearly so. She could look forward, plan, and even carry out. And the anguish which racked her mind was the home-coming of the truth, that her act must part her and her mistress for ever. Here was the crowning sacrifice. Here was, perhaps, the earthly punishment. Never again to gaze into that dear face; never again to hear that loved voice; never again to be near her to minister to her wants, to aid her, scheme for her, and, if needs be, sin for her. Never to see her in the

happiness which had been so dearly bought. Here was the sacrifice! It must be made, and she must find strength to make it, and skill to insure its being of use.

To see her mistress, to meet her even once more would be to ruin all. She must never know whose hand it was bore her freedom. She would never suspect that her servant had been the means of cutting the knot which it seemed no earthly power could undo. Ah, no earthly power could have undone it.

So when at last the morning broke grey, and trees and other objects loomed phantom-like and unreal through the mist, Sarah Miller planned and schemed, seeking the way to insure what she had so dearly bought. All her thoughts reached one end. She must fly far, far from the spot. Beatrice must never hear of her again; never know that she left London. If her proximity to the dead man became known the truth might be guessed and all be lost.

Yet before she went she must see the house in which her darling lived. She must stoop and kiss the doorstep on which those loved feet had trodden. She must waft her one passionate and unheeded farewell, then leave the place and be as one dead.

She struggled against the desire but it overcame her. With the first streaks of daylight she entered the sleeping city, and, utterly worn out, stood before her mistress's window, and for a while watched it as one might watch the last fading ray of a sun which has sunk never again to rise, and lighten the darkness which shall be eternal.

At that early hour of the morning the street was silent and deserted. There was no one to notice the strange-looking creature who stood and, with wild despair in her eyes, for ever gazed on one spot. Her look for the time was such that no one, not even the one most preoccupied with his own concerns, could have passed her without

feeling his curiosity raised as to why she was lingering there, and what gave her that appearance of dire distress.

After some minutes spent in this manner, the woman crossed the road. Her limbs dragged after her and made her exhausted state apparent. She leant her head against the door of the house which held her mistress, and sobbed convulsively. A dizzy feeling came over her, and she felt that she was upon the point of fainting, and falling senseless on the doorstep. By a supreme effort she roused herself and shook off the incipient stupor. If once she sank down her weary limbs might rebel and refuse to do her bidding. She might lie there until her presence was discovered, and that discovery ruin all. No, if she were to sink and perhaps die, let it be as far away from Beatrice as her waning strength could carry her. Sweet as it would be to breathe her last within reach of her mistress, even such

poor comfort could not be vouchsafed to her.

It speaks volumes for the iron strength of her will, insomuch that it struggled with and overcame, not only the woman's physical fatigue, but also the craving for one glimpse of Beatrice which chained her to the spot. She tore herself away, and without once looking back, forced her tired limbs to bear her to a considerable distance. Here she found a quiet doorstep on which she sat unmolested—sat and fought against her exhaustion, until such time as she would be able to procure food.

It was not long before, slowly, little by little, unit by unit, the city began to awake. Here and there the shutters went down from a shop, and at last the weary woman saw all but facing her a baker's window. She entered the shop, bought some bread, and begged a glass of water. Not for her own sake, but for the sake of

another, she was called upon to eat and drink.

She ate her bread, and then somewhat strengthened again began her pilgrimage. She crept through the streets until she reached the railway station. Here she ascertained at what time the next train for the west would start.

She had a long time to wait. She hid herself in one corner of the waiting-room, and sat like a statue. But her brain was burning, and her pulse throbbing. A strange sound, a fierce rushing sound, was ever in her ears; great wheels seemed turning and turning in her head; and if for a moment she dared to close her hot and weary eyes, she saw through the darkness a light, a fierce light, red like blood, and drawing nearer and nearer.

But in spite of all this she was able to take her seat in the train, able to exult that she had found the strength to bear her so

far; able to pray that her strength might last until she once more stood in London. Then, all would be safe. No matter what became of her then. The work was finished, what did the future of the tool matter?

The train left Munich, and as it steamed out of the magnificent station, the woman veiled her face with her black shawl. In spite of her conviction that she had but executed a pre-ordained task, she dared not look upon the spot where she had knelt on the previous night. Miles and miles passed before she removed the sombre covering from her white worn face. As the train hurried on the wheels within her brain whirled faster and faster, the rushing sound grew stronger, and the fierce red light shone redder, fiercer, and nearer.

Save for such inquiries as the exigency of the journey forced her to make, and such speech as was necessary to procure the food and drink which nature absolutely demanded,

the woman spoke no word during that long journey back. Except that now and again she pressed them to her brow, in a vain endeavour to stop the wheels which whirled in her brain, her thin hands were for ever clasped beneath her dark shawl. She sat and stared into vacancy. How could she close her eyes, when doing so at once brought the red light before them?

For all she knew that journey might have lasted months or years. Periods of time meant nothing to her now. Eternity, not Time, lay before her.

The long journey by land, the shorter journey by sea, passed like a protracted yet incoherent dream. All she knew or cared to know was that she was speeding on to London. At last the sound of English voices, the sight of English faces, told her that she had reached the last stage of her journey. Then she roused herself and made her final preparations.



She searched her pocket, and tore into small bits every piece of paper it contained, so that no written word could be left to give a clue to her identity. Last of all she drew from an envelope a photograph of Beatrice. She gazed at it long and passionately, and then with a deep sigh tore it across and across, and threw the pieces to the winds. She dared not even keep this poor relic of her darling.

London at last! Sarah Miller stepped from the train, and once more stood on the platform which she had quitted rather more than three days before. It was now past three o'clock in the morning. Whither should she turn? She stood hesitating and bewildered.

There was one thing more which she had settled to do. What was it? Oh those wheels, those wheels, will they never stop! She pressed her fingers to her temples, and strove to recall what resolution had slipped from her mind.

Ah, now she remembered what it was. Her money, she must get rid of that. She had no further need of money now that she had reached the final goal. In her pocket were both German and English coins. She collected them, and creeping stealthily to the box which stands awaiting contributions for some, doubtless, very deserving charity, she dropped in every coin that was upon her person. This done, she believed there was nothing left which could in any way show who she was or whence she came.

She passed out under the archway, a solitary, dark-robed figure with a head bent as in grief. She passed from the ghastly white glare of electric lamps into the all but deserted Strand. She walked some way up the Strand, then, without any definite aim, turned to the right, and by and by found herself on the embankment.

Still she wandered on until she reached Waterloo Bridge. She went half-way across

it, then stopped short and gazed over the parapet into the river. But no thought of self-destruction had entered into her head, although the red light was still before her eyes, the wild rush still sounding in her ears, and those fearful iron wheels in her brain circling more rapidly than ever. No, the river had but for her the attraction which a smooth, calm, peaceful stream has for all who are in deep distress. So she looked and looked; even craned over the parapet to peer into its sombre, placid depths.

At that moment a blinding light flashed upon her eyes and a hand grasped her shoulder. "Now none of that nonsense," said a sharp voice—the voice of a policeman who had seen her dark form against the stonework of the bridge. The woman turned her face to his, and the anguish written upon it persuaded the constable that he had arrived just in the nick of time.

"River air 's bad at night for such as you," he said in a kinder voice. "Now you go straight home like a good woman. I'll see you safe off the bridge. You can go from which end you like, but if you stay here any longer, well, I must run you in."

She clasped her hands. "I am mad!" she cried in piteous, imploring tones. "Can't you see I am mad? Take me and put me where mad people are sent to."

Strange as a confession of insanity seemed, the puzzled policeman was bound to take her at her word, the more so because she would not or could not give any account of herself, or name any place of residence. So she was led away a docile captive, and spent the rest of the night, or rather morning, under detention.

Mad or not she believed her work was now done; believed that she would be bestowed where her mistress would never find her, never hear of her. Mad or not,

her one concentrated aim was to keep the secret of the way in which Maurice Hervey died. If mad, the poor wretch's cunning had all but supplied the place of reason.

All but, for as usual it had forgotten one important thing. Unless Beatrice was informed of her husband's death, unless that death were proved beyond a doubt, Sarah Miller's crime would be useless and her sacrifice futile.

## CHAPTER X.

## IT WAS NO DREAM.

CARRUTHERS, as was his custom, called for Beatrice early one morning. Now that he had firmly resolved that he must, would, could, should school himself to accept the position which it seemed likely was to be his for the future, he could see no reason why he should be debarred from enjoying every moment of Beatrice's society. To say that he was resigned to his fate would be absurd. No one is resigned to fate. One is compelled to submit to its tyranny, that is all.

Of course Frank was unhappy, and of course Beatrice was unhappy. At heart

they were as wretched as any sentimental school girl would wish them to be amid such circumstances. But all the same they were not so truly miserable as they imagined. Given two young lovers kept apart by fate—with a look-out of eternal darkness—without even the hope of seeing hope glimmer in the distance, so long as they know that each loves the other, even as he or she loves her or him ; so long as they can see each other, talk to each other, even if that talk must be on indifferent subjects, they cannot be altogether unhappy. At least they have the consolation of mutual unhappiness as well as mutual love. Frank and Beatrice would have denied the accuracy of this reasoning, but it is nevertheless true.

This morning Beatrice left her boy in charge of the smiling Bavarian servant and went for a walk with Frank. It was a fair May morning, fairer perhaps elsewhere than

in Munich, which is a dry, dusty, barren land. For some time they walked in silence, and apparently without any settled destination. By and by Carruthers spoke.

“When do you think you will be ready to return to England?” he asked. Her eyes were cast down. She did not answer his question.

“Beatrice, you will take my advice in this?” he spoke gravely and tenderly.

“Yes, I will take your advice. I will do all you wish—be guided entirely by you. Heaven knows I have guided myself long enough. See where it has led me.”

Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke. Frank clenched his hands behind his back. He felt so powerless to help her. After all he could aid her so little.

“What do you propose? What do you think I should do?” she asked.

“I think we should go straight back to England; straight to Oakbury. I will



come with you, and if you wish it, tell Horace and Herbert everything."

"What will they say? What will they do? I should think they would at once turn me out of their house."

Frank smiled a sad little smile. "Dear Beatrice," he said, "can you fancy either Horace or Herbert turning out a dog who came to them for protection? That is," he added, "if the dog had not been in the mud."

"Ah, Frank, but I have been in the mud," said Beatrice sadly, "I have years of mud upon me. It will never come off, Frank."

Frank, as a man should, tried to console her, tried to persuade her that the mud was after all neither so very black nor so very thick. She shook her head and refused to believe him. Then came another pause.

"Ah!" said Beatrice, "it all comes back to the old cry—'If what has been done could only be undone!'"

"Yes," said Frank, "the cry of the first man who developed speech; his thought perhaps before speech came to him; and so it will be the cry of the last man who stands on the wreck of the world."

There was silence once more until Frank broke it by repeating his original question. Beatrice told him she could not leave Munich until Sarah returned.

"But she is in London. Why not telegraph to her? Tell her to wait there."

"I would, but I do not know where to find her. She was going to her friend's. The friend who posted my letters. Sarah used to send them, but I never thought of asking the address."

"And she is making terms with this man," said Frank rather bitterly, "is empowered to let this ruffian rob you."

"Money is nothing. He can have all he wants if he will trouble me no more."

Carruthers bit his lip. He cared little

for money as money, but it enraged him to think of this villain living in luxury at the expense of the woman he had so wronged. However, he believed that when it came to the Talberts having a voice in the matter, Hervey would find himself not so well off as he anticipated.

"Frank," said Beatrice, "I will leave with you as soon as she returns, I promise. Now let us talk of something else. We may have but a day or two longer here. Let me have those days to look back upon—days of calm before the storm broke."

Carruthers understood her. He forced himself to talk to her in something like his old style. The mirth, if it could even be called mirth, was hollow. The imitation rang falsely. But Beatrice was grateful; if only to have her thoughts turned from the one current.

"No one can fully realise what a noble thing it is to be English," said Frank,

“until he has returned to London after a tour in Germany. It is a gratifying thing when you enter your hotel and for the first time comprehend the true mission of the great Teutonic race.”

“What mission?”

“To find,” continued Frank, “that this great nation was created apparently for the purpose of supplying waiters to the English-speaking races. It is a great patriotic truth which has consoled me for many inconveniences I have suffered from its application.”

Then he told her about the strange people at his hotel in Munich. About the smart American girls who would call Paris “Parrus.” About all the other familiar *table d’hôte* characters.

“It amuses me most,” he said, “to talk to the *portiers* and waiters about the king. Every one has some fresh tale about his eccentricities. You know he turns night

into day. Starts off driving at one in the morning."

Yes, Beatrice had of course heard that.

"Floats about on a lake, on top of the palace, and fancies himself Lohengrin. Hides away from every one—do you know why?"

"An unhappy love affair years ago," said Beatrice.

"That may have been the origin of the tomfoolery," said Frank. "But the reason he keeps himself hidden now is not so romantic. He is growing so fat, he is ashamed to show himself. Fancy a fat Lohengrin!"

"I don't believe it," said Beatrice indignantly. "Most ladies look upon King Ludwig as possessed of the beauty of a Greek god."

"It's quite true. The other night he sent for one of the singers from the opera. She had to sit in a punt on the lake and

sing to him. Fancy a *prima donna* in a punt singing to an invisible king. Well, the punt was small and the lady stout. Just in the middle of a grand *cadenza* over went the boat. What do you think the king did?"

"Naturally, pulled her out."

"Not a bit of it. He rang a bell and walked away, leaving the poor thing to splash. Makes one feel a Republican to hear such things."

So Frank talked, but all his fooling was forced. They had been walking about aimlessly, and scarcely noticing where. "Shall we go anywhere—to one of the galleries?" asked Beatrice.

"No," said Frank. "It's too fine for pictures. Let us go and look at the statue of Bavaria." The statue being a long way off, they took one of those delightful little *fiacres* hired, including a coachman with a broad silver band round his hat, for something like sixpence the half-hour. One,

almost the only, relic of bygone cheap living in Munich.

They inspected the colossal statue, but did not yield to the temptation of going up into its head *via* the leg. They walked through the Hall of Fame at the back of the statue. But sight-seeing did them no more good than Frank's forced gaiety. They were both sad at heart.

"Where shall we go now?" asked Frank as they came back to the *fiacre*. "Is there anything else to see about here?" He couched this question in curious German, and addressed the driver. The driver said the great south cemetery was not far off.

"I don't like cemeteries," said Frank doubtfully.

"I do," said Beatrice. So they drove according to her wish.

They passed under the great arched entrance to the place of tombs. Beatrice, who was now deep in sad thoughts, looked

neither to the right nor left—and Frank was only looking at Beatrice. They walked straight into the great open space, and for a while, with the bright May sun shining down on them, wandered about the forest of tombs, which, after the manner of all continental memorial stones, looked untidy from the withered or tawdry wreaths which had been placed on them last All Souls' Day, and left to decay at ease. Carruthers was somewhat disappointed in the cemetery. Although this was his first visit to Munich, he fancied he had read or heard that this cemetery was one of the finest in Europe. He told Beatrice he was disappointed.

“Perhaps the finest monuments are under the piazza,” she said.

They walked across to the broad piazza which runs round the centre space. As Beatrice had suspected, the finest and most costly and artistic monuments were against the wall. Some of them were magnificent



works of art, but Carruthers paid them scant attention. Whether it was the melancholy surroundings, or the strain which, at Beatrice's wish, he had put upon himself to keep their conversation away from the subject ever uppermost in their hearts, he could not tell, but it seemed to him that at this moment his sorrow was more unendurable, more abiding than ever. He glanced gloomily over the broad, white-studded expanse, where slept thousands who had once been men even as he now was a man, who had breathed, eaten, drunk, hoped, feared, loved, and—died.

“This!” he muttered. “To this it all comes. The end of love, the end of ambition, of wealth, of poverty, of pain, of joy. All come to it, and other men and women walk over our graves and wonder who we were. Beatrice! Beatrice!” he cried, in a voice of exquisite agony, “we can live but once, and our life is wasted!”

Bravely as he had borne himself Carruthers had at last broken down.

Beatrice started. These words were the first which had been wrung from him which implied the slightest reproach. It only wanted this to complete her misery. She bent her head and the tears ran from her eyes. Then she looked at Frank with a pitiful, appealing gaze which went straight to his heart.

"I was a fool—a weak fool," he said.  
"Forgive me."

"No, you are wise. Oh, why was I ever born!"

"Let us go," said Frank. "I hate this abode of dead mortality."

So with heavy hearts they walked along the broad piazza towards the entrance to the cemetery. Somehow their hands met, and they went hand in hand. There were a few workmen and loiterers about, who, seeing them, no doubt thought it was an English

custom for a grown-up man and woman to walk so, or that these two were mourning some common loss. They were indeed !

Neither spoke. Carruthers was telling himself that he was weaker than he thought, that he could not bear the situation longer. He would see Beatrice safe in England. He would see this man and insure her future peace. Then he would—he must leave her. To see her, hear her voice, touch her hand, yet know she could not be his, was more than he could ask himself to bear.

And Beatrice's thoughts ran much in the same groove. She had from the first known it must be so. This was why she had begged that the last few days they spent in Munich might be made such as memory loves to linger upon. Such friendship as Frank had spoken of was between them an impossibility.

So as they walked down that piazza they felt that they were bidding each other a

farewell which might well be eternal. No wonder their hands refused to part !

As they drew near to the entrance they passed what was to all appearance a shop with a plate glass front opening on the piazza. In front of it were two or three men and women and several children ; the last-named on tiptoe and flattening their flat Teutonic noses against the glass. Frank also glanced that way and saw such a curious sight that, in spite of his preoccupation, he stopped.

A little way inside the glass was arranged on banks of evergreens and flowers what seemed to be a dozen dolls, of various sizes, but all large for dolls. Each was dressed in smart long robes with tinsel and other decorations, and each doll bore a large number. A curious sight ! Carruthers drew nearer, and then the truth flashed upon him. They were dead babies ! There, each in its little nest of leaves and flowers, they lay awaiting the day of burial.

"They are dead!" said Frank, turning to Beatrice.

"Yes. I remember hearing it was the custom here to let them wait like this; but I forgot all about it. A horrible custom, is it not?"

Is it a horrible custom? If startling to strangers is it more horrible than the English custom of letting the poor dead thing lie for days in an upper chamber, lie there often until the last sight one carries away of the loved one is a sight to be forgotten? Who has not known those fearful days which precede an English funeral? The fearful room with its boxed-up odour of death striving with those of sweet-scented flowers, *eau de Cologne*, and carbolic acid. It may seem harsh to bear away the poor dead clay at once, but not so harsh as the custom which jeopardises health for the sake of sentiment.

Is it a horrible custom? Horrible to

think of a loved one exposed to the eyes of the public? Horrible at first sight to watch women bringing children and lifting them up to see what lies behind the glass. But why should the dead fear to face their fellow-creatures' gaze more than the living? Why should the living be taught that the sight of death is so to be dreaded? There are none of the horrors of the *Morgue* here. We must all die, and, by the testimony of myriads of tombstones, go to heaven.

But if the sight is horrible to a stranger it is fascinating. Notice all who visit the Munich cemeteries for the first time. If they peep in at one window of the *wartsaal* they will peep in at all. Beatrice and Frank formed no exceptions to this rule.

There are several of these windows. In the one next the babies they saw the body of an old priest. He lay on his slanting bier of evergreens, dressed in his best clothes, his cold hands holding the crucifix

to his cold heart. He slept with peace written on his sweet waxen face. Was this horrible?

In the next an old woman with silver hair. She slumbered sweetly and calmly as her neighbour. Rest, perfect rest, not horror here.

In the next a young girl with a face worn to all but a skeleton's. She had died of consumption, and looked as one who had willingly given up her last breath. Here was sadness for the death of one so young, but not horror.

And so to the end. With reverent eyes Frank and Beatrice saw them all, the poor dead things lying on their green biers awaiting interment, lying there with a wire fastened to the hand so that if life was by any chance to return, whether by night or day, a bell must ring and bring aid. But they never ring for aid these poor dead things!

Frank and Beatrice turned away. It seemed to Frank, at least, that the spectacle they had seen was a fitting ending to their excursion. They walked away slowly and in silence. But they had not seen all.

In a room at the very entrance, so that comers and goers might the more readily notice it, lay the body of a man. Not on fragrant boughs, but on a plain slate bier, for there was no one to authorise the expenditure necessary to give it a bed of evergreens. A black cloth was thrown across the body and the white face was turned towards the window.

And Frank saw that white face and knew it—and Beatrice saw that white face and knew. She grasped Frank's arm, strove to speak, gave a sharp cry, and fell senseless on the stones. Carruthers lifted her and bore her to the *fiacre*. He bade the man drive home at once.

Beatrice revived. She looked at Frank



in a dazed way. "I dreamed—it was a dream!" she said in a whisper.

"It was no dream," answered Carruthers in a hoarse, choked voice. Not another word was exchanged until they reached Beatrice's home. Here Frank wanted to accompany her to her rooms. She shook her head.

"Go back, go back," she whispered. "You will see to all, learn everything, will you not?"

He nodded, re-entered the carriage, and drove back to the cemetery. The blood ran fiercely through his veins. This man, the man who stood between him and happiness, dead! It could not be! Such things as this never happen in real life. Some chance resemblance must have misled him and Beatrice. Will Carruthers, who had never yet wished a fellow-creature dead, be blamed because he trembled at the thought?

There was no mistake. He gained access

to the room. He saw the body uncovered, saw the sling which had been removed from the broken arm. And as he stood and gazed at the dead man he seemed to hear the voice of the strange servant begging him in wild accents to wait for Beatrice. Her prophecy had come true ; her curious faith had not deceived her.

He looked long on the white face. Pity, except the pity one feels for violent death, did not move his heart. But, nevertheless, the man lying there had once been loved by Beatrice ; might, had he so willed, be loved by her even now. How strange it all seemed ! At last he turned away.

He had to answer many questions ; see sundry officials. He said he identified the man as one Maurice Hervey, an artist. He could say nothing more about him—nothing about his friends. He had exchanged very few words with him. Then he left money for the corpse to be removed to another

*wartsaal* and decently laid out. Also money for funeral expenses, and for a stone with H. M. on it to be put over the grave. They told him the funeral must take place on the morrow. Then he went back to Beatrice.

She would not see him ; so he left a note saying that all was done. The next day he stood over Maurice Hervey's grave.

## CHAPTER XI.

### OLD FRIENDS AGAIN.

HE did not see her the next day. He called twice ; the second time she sent word that she would rather not see him until to-morrow. She was not ill ; she would only rather be left alone. So in a curious, indescribable state of mind Mr. Carruthers spent the day in wandering about Munich.

On the morrow he called and was admitted. He found Beatrice alone. She looked pale, but very beautiful. He noticed at once a change in her manner. A certain graceful timidity and shyness seemed to have fallen upon her, which added a new charm to the girl he had hitherto found so

calm and self-possessed. Beatrice, it may be, noticed a change also in Carruthers' bearing.

"Tell me all," she said in low tones, as after a quiet greeting he took a chair near her.

He told her all. How the man some nights ago had been picked up on the rails, almost cut in two by the wheels of an engine which had passed over him. How he had been carried into Munich and placed in *wartsaal*. How, the usual formalities having been observed, he had been left for identification, and then, with or without identification, for burial. He told her what instructions he himself had given, and how yesterday he saw his grave.

Beatrice heard him without interruption. When his recital was finished she sat in deep thought. Frank watched her in silence.

"How did he come there, on the railroad, I mean?" she asked at last.

Frank shook his head. "No one can tell," he said. "It might have been accident, it might have been suicide. From the position in which he was found the authorities incline to the latter. But he had plenty of money in his pocket. I don't know how much, for in these cases the exact amount is never stated. In short, no one knows how it happened."

Frank spoke the truth. No one knew. The railway tickets having been collected long before Munich was reached, for all the officials of the train knew, Hervey and Mrs. Miller might have disembarked with other passengers. The woman's box, which was registered through to Munich, was lying in the luggage office unclaimed. Perhaps it lies there till this day. Her hand bag went where such things go when left in a train. Could the steward or the guard have seen the dead body they might have recognised it as that of a passenger; but it was put

out of sight long before the great train came tearing back from Constantinople. So no one in Munich knew more than was embodied in the official report.

"What brought him to Munich?" asked Beatrice. "How did he know I was here?"

Frank could only shake his head again.

"He must have seen Sarah," she continued, answering her own question. "He must have learned from her where I was. Why did she not write and tell me? Some harm may have befallen her. I wish she was back."

"Would you like to see his grave?" asked Frank after a pause. Beatrice shivered.

"No," she said, "I think not—unless you would call it unwomanly not to do so."

"No," said Frank. "I can see no reason for it."

"What could I do at his grave?" asked Beatrice softly and dreamily. "One goes to a grave to weep. I could not weep.

After a load, which one has for years carried day and night, is lifted from the mind, one does not weep, one rejoices. Frank, I dare not stand over a grave and feel like that. Let me say I forgive him. I can do no more."

"No one who knew all could ask more."

"Speak nothing but good of the dead," she continued in the same dreamy way. "Frank, I cannot recall any good of which to speak. For a few weeks I loved him, or thought I loved him; but that was years, years ago. Ah me, those years! All I can now do is to say I will speak no evil of him. He is dead. I forgive him, and will try and forget him."

For the first time the tears rose to her eyes. There was a long pause. Beatrice and Frank were now standing. He took her hands in his and held them.

"Beatrice—darling," he whispered. "Do you remember the words you said a few



days ago—said in this very room? When there seemed no chance of happiness for you and me. Dearest, all is now changed. We are in a new world. Beatrice, will you say once more in our new world what you said in the old?”

Lower and lower she bent her head, and the blush rose and deepened on her white cheek. Then she raised her head, and her grey eyes looked into his. “Let me leave you one moment,” she whispered. Without waiting for the permission she drew her hands from his and glided away, swiftly as she had left him that evening at Hazlewood House, but this time without leaving him hopeless.

She came back in less than a minute, and her boy came with her. Holding him by the hand she stood and looked at Frank.

He understood. He drew the boy to him, sat down and put the little fellow between his knees. Placing one hand on

his head, he looked up at Beatrice with a grave smile.

"Dearest," he said, "children may come to us or not; but this boy shall always be to me as my own son. He shall never mourn for his unknown father, never if I can help, know shame covers that father's name."

He raised the child and kissed it. Harry, with whom Carruthers was a prime favourite, put his chubby arms round his friend's neck. Beatrice watched them and smiled softly.

Carruthers, after disengaging himself from the boy's embrace put him gently aside, rose and held out his arms. Beatrice came to them, laid her head on his shoulder, and wept happy tears. He whispered words of passionate love, kissed her again and again, and all the while Master Harry watched the two with childish attention, and wondered what was the meaning of the curious scene. At last they remembered his presence, and

Beatrice handed him over to his Bavarian nurse—an act of expulsion which he much resented.

Somehow the thought that death alone had given them the right to love, made Frank and Beatrice's love-making quiet and restrained. They were happy, of course, or Frank was, but not demonstratively happy. After he had told her about a thousand times that he loved her, Beatrice knelt at his side and held his hand.

"Frank, my own Frank," she whispered. "You will never bring the past up against me? I have been wicked, deceitful, but, dearest, I have suffered for it. Frank, you shall know every thought of my heart. I will be a true wife. If anything ever told me that the remembrance of the past made you doubt me, I should die—I should die, Frank."

Of course he took her in his arms and vowed she was the sweetest, truest, noblest,

&c., &c. What, in fact, every one vows in a position similar to his.

Then she asked him to leave her for a while—leave her to think over all that had happened. He obeyed. He too wanted to think.

Naturally he called again later in the day, and the two began in a rational way to discuss their plans for the future. Beatrice was very uneasy about Mrs. Miller. She blamed herself for not having taken the address which would reach her in London.

It was settled that they should wait a week longer in Munich, in the hope of hearing news of Beatrice's emissary. Then Carruthers spoke of something which all days he had been revolving in his mind.

“Listen, Beatrice. We are to go back together, and your cause is now my own. There is something to be faced. There are those who have a right to ask you to explain your absence. But there is a right you

can give which will over-ride all others. Dearest, let us return as husband and wife."

She flushed and trembled. "Oh, Frank, how can I? So soon!"

"Soon! Beatrice, it is more than five years. That man was dead to you more than five years ago. He died when your love died."

"True! It is true!" she murmured. "He died then, not now."

"I feel that I do not ask you to do this for selfish reasons," said Frank. "I ask it because it is best for you. A few months engagement to you would not be weariness, darling. This I must sacrifice." His arm went round her, and their lips met.

"Now for your answer?" he said.

She placed her hand in his. "Let it be as you will, my love, my lord, I have no will but yours—Oh, Frank, Frank! I feel that I can face anything, face anybody, so long as I know that we are not to

be parted—know that you are mine for ever ! ”

So they were married in Munich. Why not ? Who was this dead man that he should stand between them ? What had he done that he should be considered ? That she should truthfully say that she forgave him—that she would speak no evil of him, was all, nay more, than could be justly asked of the woman he had betrayed in even a baser and more callous way than the word usually means when applied to villains and women. Even when he met his death was he not only on his way to work her evil ? Maurice Hervey dead a week ago ? No, the man she had known as Maurice Hervey died when years ago he dropped his mask, and showed her what lay underneath.

Beatrice and Frank were married. They found an English nursemaid who was going home. They engaged her to accompany them, and take care of the boy. In due

time they all reached London. Beatrice's anxiety respecting her faithful servant had now grown very great; so the first thing they did was to try and gain tidings of her.

The only thing they could do was to apply to the police; and soon after the description of the missing woman was given they were told that it seemed to answer to that of a woman, unknown, who was in the pauper lunatic asylum. So to the asylum they went, and having been shown the clothes worn by the woman, knew that their fears were well-founded. Frank had felt no doubt about the matter. The nurse's manner on a certain night had assured him as to what the end would be. He told Beatrice so.

Beatrice was greatly shocked and distressed. "Poor Sarah," she said, "she was never mad with me, I could always calm her. She was my right hand for years, Frank. She helped me, tried to shield

me—" here Beatrice blushed as painful memories rose—" You will never know how the poor thing loved me, Frank."

No. Frank will never know, nor will his wife know how the woman loved her, and what she did for her sake !

Beatrice saw the doctor and questioned him. He told her that the woman was in a hopeless state ; what appeared to him to be the gloomiest, most incurable kind of religious mania. The chances were she would not live long.

Beatrice begged that she might see her. The doctor shook his head. An interview would do the patient harm. Beatrice would not believe this, and asked the doctor to tell her poor servant that she was here. He could judge from the effect of the news as to the advisability of a visit. The doctor humoured her. He soon returned and said that the mention of her name seemed to redouble the poor woman's



delusions. She had turned her face to the wall and made gestures of absolute aversion. Frank drew Beatrice aside.

“My dear girl,” he whispered. “Depend upon it she saw this man, let slip the name of Munich, and knew that he was on his way to you. The grief at what she had unwittingly done quite upset her poor brain. She is so troubled at it that she will not see you.”

Beatrice went to the doctor. “Oh,” she said, impulsively, and with tears in her eyes, “will you go to her once more—only once. Tell her, try to make her understand that I am married and happy.”

Mrs. Carruthers being a beautiful woman in distress, the doctor, being a young man, obeyed. He soon came back shaking his head. It was no use. The effect of his communication had been such that he must strictly forbid a visit. It was, he said, one of the commonest symptoms of such mania,

that the patient turned with aversion from those who had been most loved by her. So Beatrice sorrowfully gave up the struggle.

All they could do was to see that Sarah was removed to a place where she could be cared for, and where kind treatment was assured. There, let it be said, she is now. But it will not be for long. The doctors and the keepers know that the days of the poor mad woman, who spends eighteen hours of the twenty-four on her knees, are numbered.

After they had done all they could for Sarah, Frank and Beatrice turned to their own affairs. None of Beatrice's people knew of her being in London. Frank, of course, saw many acquaintances, but as Beatrice knew so few people their companionship created no remark. Upon inquiry at the hotel patronised by the Talberts, they learned that the brothers had not yet

come up for their perennial visit, but were expected next week. So one fine day Mr. and Mrs. Carruthers, the boy and his new nurse, went down to Blacktown.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our long-lost but, I hope, beloved friends, Horace and Herbert, were one afternoon returning from Blacktown in the large waggonette. As they came up the drive they saw something unusual—something which made them glance at each other with dismay. On the front doorstep, sunning himself, and looking as if Hazlewood House and its appurtenances were his in fee simple, stood a little boy.

No wonder, the moment some one took the horses' heads, that the Talberts jumped down to inquire what this apparition meant. The loss of the bright hair having so changed the boy's appearance, they did not at first recognise him, so no wonder that Horace, who connected painful memories

with mysterious children, groaned out,  
 "Another child!"

They put their eye-glasses up and saw that the small stranger was making violent demonstrations of friendship. The dancing blue eyes which looked up at them seemed strangely familiar. Herbert was the first to discover the truth.

"It is Beatrice's boy!" he said.

"It is," said Horace solemnly. To make sure they asked him who he was, and whence he came.

He informed them he was "mother's bewchful boy," and he waved his arms to show that the distance he had come was more than his mind could grasp. Then he recommenced his friendly advances, holding up his face in a way which showed he expected to be kissed. He was so imperious and assertive that they yielded. Herbert bent down and kissed him. Horace, who noticed that his brother's appearance as

he did so was not dignified, lifted the urchin up and likewise kissed him. Then they went indoors to learn what it all meant.

The child preceded them, and had they harboured any doubts of his identity such doubts would have been set at rest by the way in which the little urchin rubbed his feet. No child who had not lived part of his life at Hazlewood House would have performed the act so thoroughly.

Whittaker was in the hall. "Who are here, Whittaker?" asked Horace.

"Mr. and Mrs. Carruthers, sir," replied Whittaker. The Talberts stared at each other, then, hanging their hats on the proper and respective pegs, entered the drawing-room.

They saw Frank standing there with that quaint, dry smile on his face, and then they saw Beatrice coming towards them with outstretched arms. Herbert again stared

blankly at Horace who could not, however, respond to the look because Beatrice had thrown her arms round his neck.

“Kiss me, Uncle Horace, and say you forgive me,” she cried. “I have caused you all sorts of worry and anxiety, but say you forgive me.”

She *had* caused them worry and anxiety. Indeed, they had latterly been sorely pressed to account for Beatrice’s absence to Lady Bowker and others. Nevertheless she was their sister’s child and a thorough Talbert. She was also in distress. So Horace yielded, kissed her, and told her how glad he was to see her again.

After this she went to Uncle Herbert and something of the same scene was gone through. The Talberts then re-arranged their neckties, as much as to say that although such impulsive embraces might be allowed once in a way they were not to be a general rule.

"But I don't understand," said Horace.  
"Whittaker said Mr. and Mrs. ——"

"Oh, yes," said Frank. "Beatrice and I were married some time ago. Married in Munich. Fine city, Horace—you know it, of course. We only came back from our wedding trip a few days ago. You are the first we have seen. We thought perhaps you would put us up for a couple of days."

This request put the Talberts on their mettle as hosts. Hospitality overruled everything. Their house was at the young people's service so long as they wished—the longer the better. "But why did Beatrice run away?" asked Horace.

"Ah, why?" said Frank carelessly.  
"That's the question."

"It could not have been to avoid you," said Herbert.

"She says not. But one is never sure about such things."

"You were afraid you would have to give up the boy," said Horace to his niece.

She hesitated. "Yes, I feared he would be taken from me," she said. Horace looked triumphantly at Herbert. His theory had been the right one after all.

Then they went off to see that a room was got ready for their unexpected guests. While the Talberts were so engaged their guests walked down to the village and found Sylvanus Mordle.

Sylvanus positively sparkled when he heard the news. It freed his conscience from a shadow which had for months been lying upon it—the shadow of the "Cat and Compasses." He took a hand of each of his friends.

"Sorry for one thing—only one. That I didn't join these hands. Would have given worlds—anything—gone to Munich on purpose. I needn't tell either of you why I wished to do it."



The last words were spoken with genuine feeling. Mr. and Mrs. Carruthers pressed the curate's hands and thanked him for his good wishes. When they left him Sylvanus called for his tricycle and propelled himself ten miles out and ten miles home again. He did so, he told himself, to keep his wind up to sermon mark. He was unwilling to confess that the need for such violent bodily exercise was brought about by the sight of Beatrice as a bride.

That night at Hazlewood House the table was as tastefully laid, the napery as smooth and spotless, the glass as lustrous, the wines as unimpeachable, the cookery as perfect as ever. Frank did nearly all the talking. He spoke of his future plans, of the life he and Beatrice meant to lead, as coolly as if all her friends had been at her wedding. Beatrice said very little. She was simply, quietly happy. Horace thought the young couple behaved very well. As he remarked

to Herbert afterwards, "There were none of those embarrassing little familiarities which so often make the company of a bride and bridegroom—well, undesirable."

Beatrice left the men and strolled through the garden. Horace and Herbert then filled their glasses, and in a courtly way wished Frank every happiness. "Not," said Horace, "that we can honestly say we approve of your having been married in this clandestine way. But you may of course have had good reasons for it."

The Talberts felt they had missed a great deal in not having been allowed to superintend everything connected with their niece's wedding.

"We had good reasons," said Frank.

"We think, however, we have a right to ask for an explanation of Beatrice's strange conduct—her flight, and concealment."

"Certainly," said Herbert, "most certainly."

So Frank told them all. As he had the command of language and spoke in earnest tones; as he had the skill to make certain shadows look lighter, and to bring out strong points in his client's favour most strongly; as he could speak of what she had endured, and so invoke pity as well as mercy, Beatrice could scarcely have found a better advocate.

But Horace! Herbert! A line of notes of exclamation would not properly express their surprise. With eyes fixed on the speaker, they listened like persons under a spell. Even when Frank had said his say they continued to gaze at him. Horace was the first to speak. "Is this true?" he gasped.

"Every word of it—poor girl!" said Frank.

"Then," said Horace, with his no appeal manner, "we can never forgive her—never see her again. Never!"

He glanced at Herbert, as if expecting the usual echo. But it did not come. Frank rose.

“Very well; then there’s nothing more to be said. I’ll go and tell my wife to put her things on. Which is the best Blacktown hotel?”

This was a staggering shot. It was a cruel shot. Carruthers was right when he said it would take a great deal to make the Talberts turn even a dog away.

“Give us a few minutes to talk it over,” said Herbert. “Let us leave you here for a while.”

“No. I’ll go into the garden. I can’t give you more than twenty minutes, because most of our things are unpacked, and it is growing late.”

Before he left them he spoke again; this time with all his former earnestness. “Horace, Herbert,” he said, turning from one to the other. “In talking this over

remember that if you cannot forgive her we must be strangers hereafter. By casting her off you give the world a right to say what it chooses. Remember also she is my wife—that she loves you—that she is even now on thorns of suspense awaiting your decision.”

With this he left them, went into the garden, and, out of sight of the house, walked with his arm round Beatrice and bade her be of good cheer.

Before the twenty minutes had expired Whittaker came to inform them that Mr. Talbert desired him to say that tea was waiting in the drawing-room. Frank smiled, drew Beatrice's trembling arm within his own, and led her indoors. As soon as Whittaker had withdrawn after handing round the tea, Horace spoke. He was standing up, his cup in his hand, and his calm eyes seemed to be gazing at nothing.

“My dear Beatrice,” he said very gravely,

"I think if you and Frank could manage to prolong your stay till to-morrow week, we might ask a few friends to meet you at dinner. The invitation will be a short one, but under the circumstances will no doubt be excused."

Carruthers turned away to hide a smile. Yet he felt that, considering who the speaker was, no words could have been better, more judiciously, or more delicately chosen to express the fact that Horace and Herbert had decided to forgive the culprit, and not only to say no more about her misdeeds, but also if necessary show the world that they took her part. It was a triumph.

No more was said; but Beatrice could not refrain from letting a few tears of gratitude bedew Horace's immaculate shirt front, or from sitting for a little while with Herbert's hand in hers.

Sir Maingay had, of course, to be told all. This was a painful task, as telling Sir

Maingay meant telling Lady Clauson. Her ladyship had her revenge by being able to say the girl had, after all, "done something disgraceful," but as she thinks a great deal about the honour of her husband's family, she will not proclaim the correctness of her estimate of Beatrice's character.

And others will have to be told. The Oakbury people will hear a great deal. They will shake their heads and gossip. But fortunately, or unfortunately, Mr. and Mrs. Carruthers's future life will not be spent among these families of position, so such gossip will matter little to them. They will live in the great world of London, and Frank Carruthers may or may not become a famous man. At any rate he will be a happy one.

And Beatrice? Beatrice will make a circle of friends. No secret will be made of the facts that she has been twice married, and that little Harry is her child by her first

husband. And if some day it should be whispered in that circle that for some reasons only known to herself she passed for years as a single woman when she was a wife, what will it matter? Better that than passing as a wife when a woman is single.

The world is like a cat, pleasant and sweet when rubbed the right way. Frank and Beatrice are rich—the trustees raised no question on account of the first marriage—they are hospitable, kind-hearted, clever, young, and good-looking, and Frank seems likely to rise to eminence. In such cases friends are very good-natured and trouble themselves very little about idle reports. Indeed, all who care to inquire into Mrs. Carruthers's history may know all there is to be known.

No—not all. Not the means by which happiness was brought within her grasp. That is known only to a wild-eyed, white-



faced woman, whose gaunt features grow every day more gaunt, who, day by day, sinks into a more hopeless state. Only she, this victim to the dreariest religious creed the world has yet invented—doubly dreary because it is logical and unanswerable—only she knows how Beatrice's freedom was bought, how her happiness was assured.

And she will soon die and go to her appointed place. But she will die and make no sign.

THE END.

BEDFORD STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON.

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